

CINEFANTASTIQUE

February

Volume 28 Number 8

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**STAR
WARS**

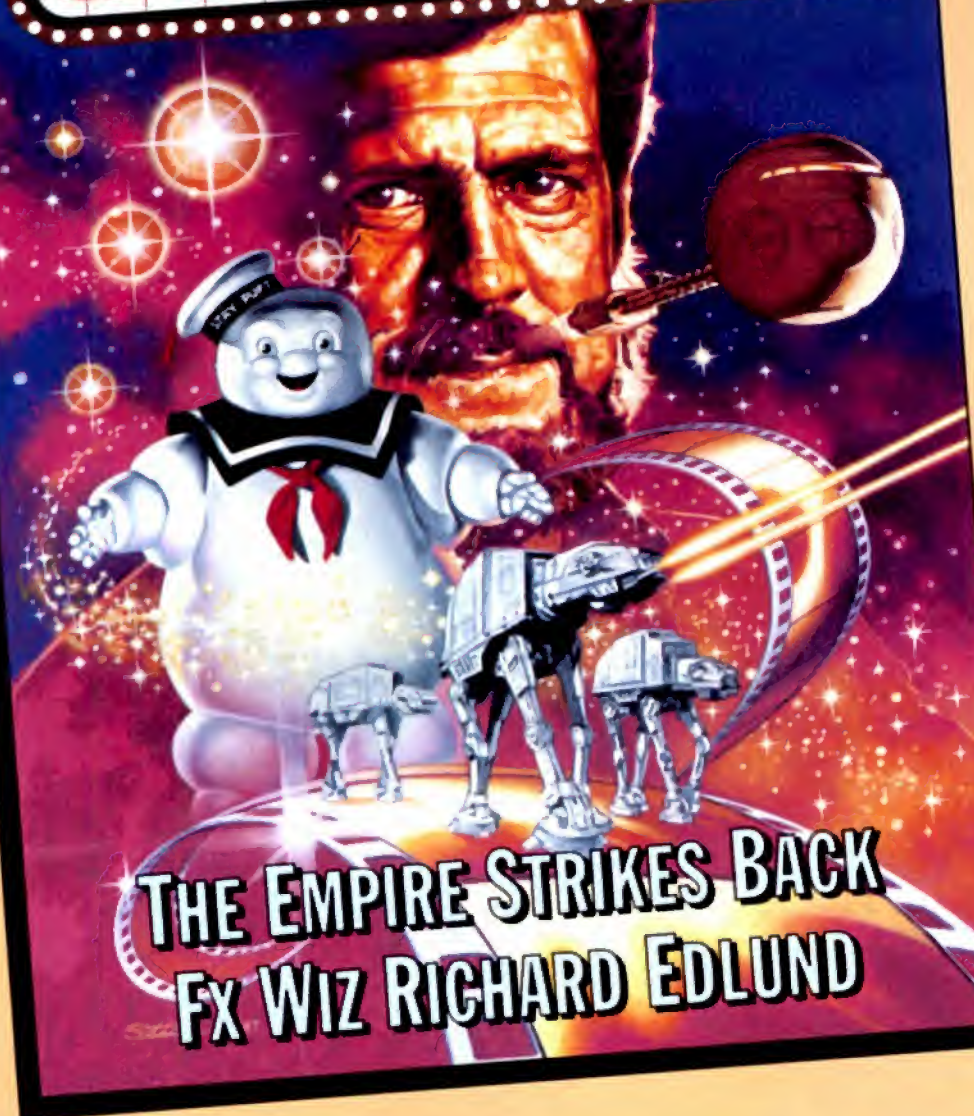
THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
THE NEW SPECIAL EFFECTS
PREVIEW: "CLONE WARS"

STUART GORDON'S
"SPACE TRUCKERS"

PAUL SCHRADER
ON "TOUCH"



CINEFANTASTIQUE



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
FX WIZ RICHARD EDLUND

THE REVIEW OF HORROR FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION FILMS GOES MONTHLY

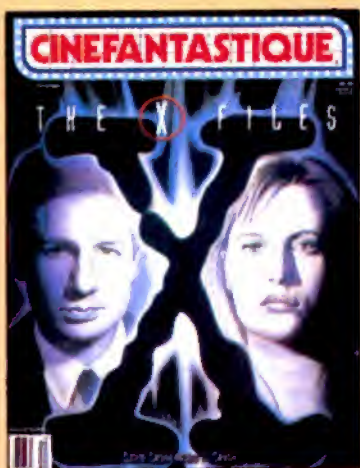
CINEFANTASTIQUE is now published each and every month, with issues jam-packed with the latest stories on the hottest films you want to see.

Don't miss our next issue, as the celebration of STAR WARS continues with an issue devoted to effects master Richard Edlund and the effects legacy of STAR WARS. Edlund talks about his Oscar-winning work on the effects of STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and RETURN OF THE JEDI, and the reasons he left Lucasfilm's ILM to form Boss Film, one of the leading effects suppliers in Hollywood. And in the same issue, effects artists Harrison Ellenshaw and Phil Tippett on the amazing effects work of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and RETURN OF THE JEDI. Plus, a rare interview with British actor Peter Cushing on his premier villainy as Grand Moff Tarkin in STAR WARS! The Force is Back and we've got it!

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There has been much talk about whether George Lucas had the right to tamper with STAR WARS for its re-release this year. In fact, Mark Altman, my counterpart at *Sci-Fi Universe*, even went so far as to call the revision "morally unjustifiable," stating that "once you've released your movie to the public, it's no longer yours, it's the audience's."

Unfortunately, there is precedent for reworking material after it has been given to the public. To cite one early example, author Mary Shelley revised the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. Were those changes improvements? Leonard Wolf makes a persuasive argument in *The Essential Frankenstein* for the superiority of the 1818 text. One can cite many subsequent examples of bad second-guessing (e.g., CLOSE ENCOUNTERS). On the other hand, the much-praised "Director's Cut" of BLADE RUNNER was a revision that brought the film more closely in line with what Ridley Scott had originally envisioned but never achieved—precisely what George Lucas is claiming about STAR WARS. Few criticized Scott, so why attack Lucas?

This, I think, is the reason: Scott's film was always considered flawed, but STAR WARS is regarded as a classic—i.e., sacred and, therefore, inviolate. I, however, find that criteria too vague and emotional. The real question, for me, is intent. For example, if Stanley Kubrick wanted to use CGI to erase the one visible wire in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, who would argue? But is Lucas seeking to perfect his art, or is he trying to increase the commercial viability of an old product—like slapping a "new and improved" label on a cereal box—while also better setting up the planned prequels? Frankly, no one who produced both WILLOW and HOWARD THE DUCK and handed the directing reins of RETURN OF THE JEDI to a hack like Richard Marquand, is a perfectionist. More likely, after years of merchandising a dormant film franchise, Lucas is probably less concerned with perfecting STAR WARS than with turning it into a two-hour trailer for the next trilogy.

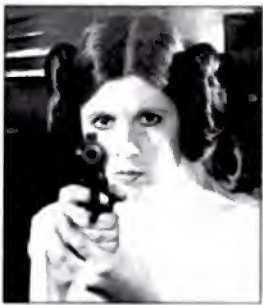
Steve Biodrowski



Page 7



Page 12



Page 16



Page 46



Page 50

4 RELEASE SCHEDULE: THIS MONTH'S GENRE FILMS

5 HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC: NEWS AND NOTES

7 SPACE TRUCKIN' FROM BEYOND

Stuart Gordon discusses SPACE TRUCKERS, still awaiting U.S. distribution. / Update by Dennis Fischer

8 HORROR 2000: "GASTON LEROUX'S WAX MASK"

Dario Argento updates HOUSE OF WAX. / Article by Alan Jones

12 "TOUCH" AND GO

Paul Schrader on adapting Elmore Leonard's uncharacteristic novel about faith healing. / Interview by David Skal

14 "CRIMETIME"

THE VANISHING director George Sluizer reappears with this darkly futuristic effort. / Preview by Alan Jones

16 "STAR WARS"—THE SPECIAL EDITION RE-ISSUE

We preview the revised film and look back at the saga's enduring appeal. / Articles by Lawrence French, Frank Garcia, Fred Szebin, Patricia Moir, and Dan Cziraky

32 SELLING "STAR WARS"

Ad art from a galaxy far, far away. / Article by Lawrence French

38 "SPECIAL EFFECTS"

Ben Burt's Imax documentary takes us behind the scenes of the movie magic in STAR WARS. / Interview by Frank Garcia

40 CYBER-CINEMA: A SHORT HISTORY OF CGI

Have computers taken over Hollywood? / Article by Mike Lyons

44 BOOK EXCERPT: "V IS FOR VAMPIRE"

In the Introduction from his new book, author David J. Skal ponders the ever metamorphosing metaphor of the undead.

46 ALIEN NATION: "THE UDARA LEGACY"

A new made-for-TV movie. / Article by F. Colin Kingston

48 "PINKY AND THE BRAIN"

Ambitious animated mice win an Emmy. / Article by Mike Lyons

50 "L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE"—IMAX IN 3-D

A stunning look at a possible future. / Article by Russell Lissau

53 REVIEWS

Capsule comments, restorations, film festivals; plus the new book, STAR WARS: From Concept to Screen to Collectible

58 THE BORDER

"Mainstream" films that cross the border into genre territory.

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EAGERLY AWAITED

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (Fox)

We all know about the flack George Lucas has received over upgrading and revising STAR WARS for its re-issue in January, but what about THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK? Is the sequel less a sacred text than its progenitor and therefore less worthy of being protected from violation? The truth is much more basic: unlike STAR WARS, EMPIRE had no scenes left on the cutting room floor, so there is less room for "restoration" and alteration this time out. Also, despite its Academy Award for visual effects, the film featured some of the most egregious matte lines, blue-screening fringing, and even outright transparent composites ever seen in a multi-million dollar motion picture. If anything, it's about time somebody got around to cleaning up these glaring mistakes. As a film, EMPIRE has qualities to recommend it over STAR WARS: it is a darker film, with more sense of danger and suspense, that muddled the clear and easy separation of good-and-evil seen in the original. The pacing is brilliantly sustained—essentially a feature-length montage between scenes of desperate flight from the advancing Empire, intercut with quieter moments of Luke's quest to continue his education. The final saber battle with Darth Vader is brilliantly choreographed, and the revelation of Luke's parentage is truly chilling. Unfortunately, the film has no ending to speak of, such niceties being deemed unnecessary when you want to make sure that the audience will fork over \$7 more to see the sequel. You don't think Lucas will try to fix that for the re-issue, do you?

February 21

CRASH (Fine Line) February/March

The usual David Cronenberg vision is crystallized to absolute perfection in this adaptation of J.G. Ballard's cult novel—which is not to say that the resulting film is even remotely entertaining in any conventional sense. But it is absolutely fascinating in the way it lays out an incredible premise and works its through with the precision of a laboratory experiment—never flinching from the results, however horrible. Along the way, Cronenberg's camera reveals more sex and nudity than ever displayed on-screen in anything other than a hardcore pornographic film, and the strange thing is—absolutely none of it is the least bit erotic! By now you have probably heard that the story involves a weird cult that seeks erotic stimulation from car crashes, but the film is absolutely coldly cerebral in its approach to this material. The result is a piece of almost hypnotizing voyeurism, utterly devoid of emotional connection on the part of the characters—who seem to be living in some kind of parallel universe where all of this weirdness is just accepted with matter-of-fact ennui—or on the part of the audience, who are asked to view this as if peering in dispassionately at ants in an ant farm. Cronenberg must be the most detached filmmaker since Stanley Kubrick. SEE CFQ 28:3

LOST HIGHWAY (October) February 21

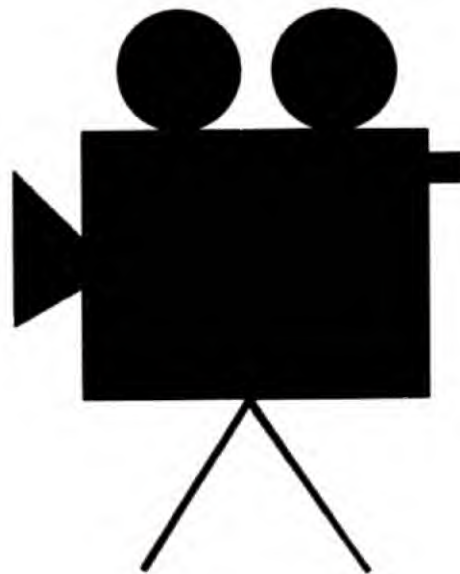
David Lynch's latest film, co-scripted with Barry Gifford (WILD AT HEART), follows two parallel stories, one about a jazz musician (Bill Pullman) accused of his wife's murder, the other about a young mechanic (Balthazar Getty) whose gangster boyfriend is having an affair with a mysterious temptress. Patricia Arquette plays both of the women in question, who may in fact be the same person. Set in a city like Los Angeles but actually a product of Lynch's imagination, the film is wrapped in the director's trademark dream-like atmosphere and filled with impossible occurrences: one man turns into another; a woman who may be dead seduces the man who might have murdered her; a man phones himself and—inexplicably—answers at the other end of the line. The score is by Angelo Badalamenti, with new songs by Nine Inch Nails, Smashing Pumpkins, and Marilyn Manson. SEE CFQ 28:7:59.



RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson
(unless otherwise noted)



THE RELIC (Paramount) January 17

The studio that made us wait five months for THINNER (in retrospect, it was less a wait than a temporary reprieve) now unearths THE RELIC after an equal delay, dusting it off just in time to provide a little monster mayhem after all the feel-good genre films last Christmas. Does Paramount really think the film has a better chance now than it did late last August, when it would have been up against not only leftover summer blockbusters but also the Olympics? Well, traditionally, genre films released at this time of year have done modest business at best, but hey—modest business is better than no business at all! Actually, our hopes were raised by producer Gale Ann Hurd's previous outing, THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS (reviewed this issue), and director Peter Hyams is at least a competent handler of action and genre elements. SEE CFQ 27:10.

STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE (Fox) January 31

Now is your chance to go back to a time long ago and a galaxy far, far away. Well, actually you can't go back, because this isn't the same movie you saw all those years ago; instead, you'll have to settle for a "Special Edition." By the way, how many of you remember that when this film was first released, it didn't bear the subtitle "Chapter 4: A New Hope"? This addition was made only after the release of (what is fully titled) "STAR WARS Chapter 5: The Empire Strikes Back." Since both sequels are known only by their subtitles, shouldn't we start calling the first film A NEW HOPE? SEE PAGE 16.

TOUCH (MGM) February ??

Paul Schrader (CAT PEOPLE) wrote and directed this film adaptation of Elmore Leonard's novel, about an ex-monk who works as a stigmata-manifesting faith healer in an L.A. rehab center. Skeet Ulrich, Tom Arnold, Christopher Walken, and Bridget Fond star. SEE PAGE 12.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

RETURN OF THE JEDI (Fox)

This absolutely embarrassing fiasco did have the best special effects of the three films as seen during their original theatrical releases, so let's hope George hasn't done too much fine tuning in that regard. However, we cannot help wishing there was some way for him to fix everything else that is wrong with this movie. The revisions would be so extensive, unfortunately, that, except for a complete remake, it would probably be impossible to implement them all. That giant orifice in the desert just screams for Freudian analysis (was Lucas going through his divorce with Marcia at the time?) And why all the emphasis on the length of time (something like 1000 years) that it takes to digest its victims—when we know they are more likely to die from suffocation/dehydration/starvation within a few hours or days? And how about that Emperor with the rotted teeth? (I guess conquering a galaxy keeps him too busy to visit the dentist.) Isn't Luke awfully smug for a supposed Jedi during his rescue of Han Solo? Why is the rebuilt Death Star easier to destroy than the old one? (Before, only someone guided by the Force could hit the vulnerable target; now just about any hot-shot pilot can do it.) And why are we supposed to think that blowing up the Death Star will accomplish anything. (I mean, they did it in STAR WARS, and that just led to the Rebel Forces' retreat in EMPIRE.) Why does Anakin Skywalker look like Uncle Fester when he takes off his Darth Vader helmet? Is there any way the Ewoks could be digitally replaced—say with clones of Fozzie Bear? God, that seems like a lot to fix, but don't give up hope: there is a quick, effective, and inexpensive solution: offer it to the folks on the Satellite of Love as MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000: THE NEXT MOVIE.

March 7

HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

THE POSTMAN

Kevin Costner goes back to the future and back to the director's chair.

by Alan Jones

After *WATERWORLD*, Kevin Costner goes back to the future with *THE POSTMAN*, which he has agreed to star in and direct for Warner Bros. The post-apocalyptic thriller marks Costner's first directing effort since winning the Oscar in 1989 for his debut effort, *DANCES WITH WOLVES*. *THE POSTMAN* is being made by Costner's own company, Tig Productions; and his business partner in that venture, Jim Wilson, attended this year's Sitges International Fantasy Film Festival, where his latest movie as a director, *HEAD ABOVE WATER*, was in competition (it won the Best Soundtrack Award for composer Christopher Young).

HEAD ABOVE WATER stars Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz, and Craig Sheffer. Like *NIGHTWATCH*, it is a remake of one of the biggest Scandinavian box office hits of recent years. It's a fatalistic thriller, following an ever-increasing paranoid chain of events into gruesome



Kevin Costner (seen here with Dennis Hopper in *WATERWORLD*) will make a second attempt at a post-apocalyptic science-fiction epic with *THE POSTMAN*.

accidental death after the simple act of a postcard is mislaid on an idyllic island retreat.

Wilson met Costner when he directed the then unknown actor's first movie, *STACY'S KNIGHTS* in 1981, and he's currently preparing *THE POSTMAN* to begin shooting March, 1997. Wilson said, "We've had the title registered for 11 years, since we bought the option on David Brin's book. Despite the recent art house success of *IL POSTINO*—and they shouldn't have really used the translated title—I think everyone will have forgotten about that by the time *THE POSTMAN* is released next Christmas."

Regarding the plot, Wilson explained, "Although the story is set 30 years into the future, Eric Roth and Brian Koppelman's script isn't very space age—sorry—it's more a throwback to the Western genre. The film takes place ten years after a civil war has ripped the guts out of American society, and the people who are left are living in small hamlets. Costner plays a travelling troubadour-cum-messenger going from

village to village spouting Shakespeare and acting the classics to anyone who'll give him food and shelter. It's about how he keeps these tiny remnants of society together as they face bleak prospects. Anyway that's how our adventure begins. The bad guys come later!" □

BAYWATCH NIGHTS

by Frank Barron

Being an astute actor-producer, David Hasselhoff (formerly of *KNIGHT RIDER*) has subtly renamed his series from *BAYWATCH* to *BAYWATCH NIGHTS*—emphasis on the *NIGHTS*. "I want to scare the audience," he explained. "I want them to be frightened. I want monsters, terror. I want our show to be sci-fi, with horror—real or imagined."

When it first came on the air, the show featured detectives on the beach, the scene of his popular *BAYWATCH* series. "I realized the show needed a changeover," said Hasselhoff. "We made some minor cast changes, and I turned the private eyes into being involved in *X-FILES* type cases, rather than corporate takeover shows." Regarding the hit Fox show, he admitted, "While I don't watch it too often, many of my cast are regular viewers of that series, and they tell me about it," he explained. "The trend in television today is toward fright nights—'creature of the week' shows. I've become a fan of horror—the vampire, haunted house genre."

Unlike many network shows, which use a lot of dialogue and exposition, Hasselhoff said that he wanted his show to be "continual action. I want to take myths, like Bigfoot, and transfer them to our show. And I want to draw the youngsters into it along with their parents, like my old *KNIGHT RIDER* series." □

Production Starts THE COLONY

Jean-Claude Van Damme continues his policy of hiring Hong Kong filmmakers to make their American film debuts (e.g., John Woo in *HARD TARGET* and Ringo Lam in *MAXIMUM RISK*). This time Tsui Hark directs a high-tech James Bondish action tale that apparently bears a certain resemblance to Patrick McGouhan's *THE PRISONER*. Basketball star Dennis Rodman and alleged actor Mickey Rourke co-star.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves star for director Taylor Hackford in this tale of a young lawyer who gradually learns that the firm he has joined actually services the Devil himself. Arnold Kopelson produces; the script is by Larry Cohen, Jonathan Lemkin, and Tony Gilroy.

DR. BEAN

Rowan Atkinson brings his eccentric BBC creation to the big screen—a character whose bizarre and eccentric adventures occasionally impinge on the fantastic.

more on next page

Short Notes

So, you're wondering whatever happened to *A.I.*, the uber-science-fiction film announced by Stanley Kubrick. It turns out that the director of *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* has put that project on the back burner while shooting the non-genre effort *EYES WIDE SHUT*, with Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, and Harvey Keitel. Principal photography started late last year. ☺ Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin's *GODZILLA* keeps lumbering toward us. TriStar recently put out a joint press release, along with the Toho Company, announcing that the film would begin production this spring for a summer 1998 release. ☺ While Pierce Brosnan prepares for a second stint as James Bond, he may have competition. Kevin McClory has announced plans to produce a rival Bond pic. In the late '50s, McClory and author Ian Fleming developed a Bond TV-series that never materialized. After Fleming based his novel *Thunderball* on one of the treatments (about the theft of a nuclear warhead), McClory managed to retain the screen rights, producing the film version in 1964 as part of the Broccoli-Saltzman series and later producing a remake independent of the series, *NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN*, in 1983. The proposed third filming of the tale is titled *WARHEAD 2000 A.D.* □

KULL THE CONQUEROR

HERCULES actor Kevin Sorbo makes the jump to big screen sword & sorcery.

by Alan Jones

Stand aside HERCULES. Kevin Sorbo, the headliner of that top rated syndicated television show, is making the move to feature films with a similarly styled sword-and-sorcery concept. The \$35 million Raffaella De Laurentiis production of KULL THE CONQUEROR, filmed in Bratislava, Slovakia, like DRAGONHEART before it, will be released by Universal Pictures next summer, when it is expected to make Sorbo a major movie star.

It was Raffaella De Laurentiis who kick-started the career of Arnold Schwarzenegger with CONAN THE BARBARIAN; and, in fact, KULL THE CONQUEROR was originally planned as the second Conan sequel, after CONAN THE DESTROYER. When Schwarzenegger bowed out of the project a few years ago, screenwriter Charles Edward Pogue adapted the script for another Robert E. Howard hero—KULL THE CONQUEROR who, in reality, is Conan's father.

Set in the kingdom of Valusia, Kull is the slave king who must defend his crown from the villainous Taligaro and the resurrected evil goddess Akivasha. Starring alongside Sorbo while he fights such mythical dangers as "The Six Mummies of Acheron" are Tia Carrere



"Kull is not Hercules—that's for sure," said Kevin Sorbo, comparing his TV character (above) to his first feature film role. "He's meaner and darker."

(TRUE LIES), Litefoot (INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD), Karina Lombard (LAST MAN STANDING), Harvey Fierstein (INDEPENDENCE DAY), and Thomas Ian Griffith. *Miami Vice*

director John Nicolella is making his feature debut after production delays caused the original director, Kevin Hooks, to bow out.

On the torture dungeon location at Cerveny Kamen Castle in Bratislava, Sorbo said, "Kull is not Hercules—that's for sure! While he still has a good sense of humour, he's meaner and darker. He's a predator who has learned a lot from living with animals in the forests of Atlantis. Like Hercules, he's an enjoyable hero. Audiences will see the arcs and changes he goes through on his mystical quest and be equally moved and thrilled.

"Since the success of HERCULES," Sorbo continued, "I've had many movie offers. I could have done a futuristic movie and gotten away from the whole sword-and-sorcery genre which HERCULES is responsible for bringing back. But KULL THE CONQUEROR had the best story. And if I cared about comparisons with Schwarzenegger, I'd really be selling my capabilities as an actor short." □

Where is ELSEWHERE?

It used to be that the news was the news—i.e., what happened got reported. Nowadays, with rival publications eager to scoop each other, as often as not the news is not what *has happened* but what *might happen* in the future. In film magazines, this results in numerous reports of upcoming projects, many of which never materialize, and seldom if ever do the publications bother explaining what happened to that highly touted film that never got made. We would like to break with that tradition and explain what happened to ELSEWHERE, the proposed reunion of the EXORCIST team of screenwriter William Peter Blatty and director William Friedkin—a project we mentioned over a year ago. "My notion was to do something scary, and I started it, but when I sat down to write, my mind said *no*," Blatty explained to me recently. The author, of course, was a successful, if not famous, comic novelist and screenwriter before striking gold with the book and film about a possessed little girl, and he has long wanted to get away from horror and back into comedy. "It ended up like a ghost story written by Noel Coward," he recounted. "When Friedkin read it, he hit the roof! So I'm doing it as a novel, instead." Meanwhile, Blatty has written a new novel, *Demons Five*, *Exorcists Nothing*, a humorous fable, inspired by his experiences in Hollywood, about shady goings-on surrounding the filming of a horror novel called *The Satanist*.

Steve Biodrowski

Obituaries

by Jay Stevenson

Beryl Reid

The veteran English character actress, who won a Tony award in 1966 for *The Killing of Sister George* and recreated the role in Robert Aldrich's 1968 filmization of the play, died in October at the age of 76. Amidst a varied career on stage and screen, she lent her talents to a number of horror and fantasy projects, her proper English, even eccentric, demeanor often adding an ironic counterpoint to the horrific proceedings in genre efforts like: DR PHIBES RISES AGAIN, THE BEAST IN THE CELLAR, PSYCHOMANIA, and YELLOW-BEARD (1983). □

Production Starts

continued from previous page

EARTH MINUS ZERO

Joey Travolta (guess whose brother?) directs a cast of familiar faces (Pat Morita, Marsha Strassman, Sam Jones [remember FLASH GORDON?], and Rhonda Shear) in this science-fiction effort.

MIMIC

The eagerly awaited sophomore effort from writer-director Guillermo Del Toro (CRONOS) was co-written by Steven Soderbergh and John Sayles. Mira Sorvino heads a cast that includes Josh Brolin and Charles Dutton.

MORTAL KOMBAT II

Brent Friedman (TICKS) and Bryce Zabel co-scripted this sequel to the surprise hit of two years ago. John R. Leonetti replaces Paul Anderson in the director's chair.

PHANTOMS

Peter O'Toole stars in this filmization of the novel by Dean Koontz, who co-scripted the adaptation with Tegen West. With Joanna Going (DARK SHADOWS, 1991). Joe Chappelle (HALLOWEEN 6) directs for Dimension Films.

PROPHECY II: ASHTOWN

Dimension Films, purveyors of bad sequels like HALLOWEEN 6 and HELLRAISER IV, finally released a good, original film with PROPHECY two years ago. So, do they hire writer-director Gregory Widen to make another good, original film? No, they make a sequel! Despite being definitively dispatched in the original, Christopher Walken returns as Gabriel in this alleged "science-fiction" effort, although how that description will be justified remains a mystery.

SPAWN

Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, Martin Sheen, D.B. Sweeney, and former *Imagi-Movies* cover girl Mindy (now Melinda) Clarke star in this comic book adaptation written by Alan McElroy and directed by Mark Dippe.



Space Truckers

Stuart Gordon's film awaits US launch.

Preview by Dennis Fischer

Stuart Gordon's *SPACE TRUCKERS* is the largest independently financed science fiction film ever to emerge from the Emerald Isle of Ireland. Its \$23-million budget is the largest Gordon has ever had to work with, though that cost still falls far below the expense of the average studio production in Hollywood. Gordon has been trying to put together this project for the past three years, much of which was spent in preparation for this elaborate production that portrays both the realities and some playful speculation about the future of space travel. After weathering numerous delays, budget shortfalls, and other difficulties, the film finally premiered at the Sitges Film Festival in Spain last fall. Next, it opens in Great Britain in February, but U.S. distribution has not been set, pending a deal by the film's producer, Goldcrest.

Regarding his choice to make *SPACE TRUCKERS* as an independent feature, Gordon said, "I think the biggest pro is that you don't have to work with the studio. You don't have to do anything by committee. It was approached like a low-budget movie, even though the budget was the highest I've ever had. I was pretty much able to do what I wanted, and as a result the film is very quirky and doesn't seem like it was

made up out of a cookie cutter. It has the sort of an edge to it that you don't see in a studio film."

Gordon added that studios "want to please everybody. They're dealing with marketing and demographics and numbers crunched by computers. They do not encourage filmmakers to have an individual point of view or make a statement. There are some directors who really do some incredible work on their own—people like Brian De Palma—and then they work for the studios and their work begins to look like everybody else's. I don't like to use the word 'auteurism,' but I think the reason you make a movie

is that you have something to say and a certain way you want to say it, that it's something that's very personal."

The primary difficulty of *SPACE TRUCKERS* being an independently financed film was that there was no studio to go to for more money when the need arose. Consequently, the filmmakers had to be able to do everything within their budget, discussing what was feasible and scaling back when necessary. "The only [excision] I really regret," said Gordon, "is we had a chase sequence which we had to limit because of the budget. We'd shot the live action components. It was funny because one of the storyboard guys had just finished working for Spielberg on one of the Indiana Jones

movies, and he had to go back and re-storyboard a sequence for budgetary reasons because they just couldn't afford it, so that happens on every movie, no matter what the budget is. There are always things you want to do that you're not able to."

Of the final result, Gordon said, "*SPACE TRUCKERS* is a reaction against a lot of films, space movies of the past. There is always a kind of a coldness, the special effects often dwarf the people, and I wanted to turn that around and make the focus the people instead of the special effects." □

Top of page: some EVA activity courtesy of effects by the Computer Film Company of London. Below: actor Dennis Hopper makes a change of pace from villain to hero as the film's Space Trucker, blackmailed into hauling illicit cargo.



GASTON LEROUX'S WAX MASK

**Dario Argento produces
a new form of 'Horror 2000.'**

By Alan Jones

Italy's premier special effects technician, Sergio Stivaletti, makes his feature film directing debut with *IL TERRORE DELLA MASCHERA DI CERA/THE TERROR OF THE WAX MASK*. Shot between July 9 and August 13 in Summer 1996 on Rome locations, and at Stivaletti's new studio facility in the capital's outskirts, the \$3-million horror-fantasy is produced by Dario Argento for his own company Cine 2000, the Italian distributor Medusa, and the French sales agents Canal Plus. Although currently sporting the export title *GASTON LEROUX'S WAX MASK* to ally it in pub-

lic consciousness to *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* and *MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN*, that may be changed, along with the tentative Italian title, by February 1997 release time.

WAX MASK was originally going to mark the first highly anticipated collaboration between giallo guru Dario Argento and veteran splatter-meister Lucio Fulci, director of such gore favorites as *ZOMBIE*, *GATES OF HELL*, *SEVEN DOORS OF DEATH*, and *THE NEW YORK RIPPER*. Argento explained, "I was one of the guests of honor at the Rome Fanta Festival in 1994, and I was shocked to see Fulci turn up in a wheelchair looking so tired, ill, and



The wax museum workshop in *WAX MASK*.

in a bad state generally. I will be perfectly honest: up until this time there was no love lost between Fulci and myself. I always felt he had copied my style in his giallo pictures (*A LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN*, *THE PSYCHIC*, etc.), and our paths never crossed socially or business-wise. But my heart went out to him when I saw him in such a dreadful physical condition."

He continued, "I decided to try and help him there and then. His agent told me he was about to have a serious hospital operation—which the agent paid for because Fulci couldn't afford to—and I knew the best recovery therapy would be to get him working again."

Fulci had not directed a film for six years—his last film being *LE PORTE DEL SILENZIO/DOOR TO SILENCE*. Argento said, "So I suggested we work together and remake a classic movie that we both loved and had fond memories for. Our first suggestion was a new version of *THE MUMMY*, and we hammered out a script with Dardano Sacchetti (*CAT O'NINE TAILS*). But we couldn't find a new hook for the subject so we shelved that idea. We were desperate for a long while after that until Fulci suddenly said, 'Why not redo *HOUSE OF WAX*?'"

Argento and Fulci promptly watched every film ever made featuring waxworks and wax museums, from the 1953 3-D Vincent Price film and its 1932 progenitor *THE MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM* to

Actor Robert Hossein and producer Dario Argento on the set of the this loose remake of *HOUSE OF WAX*.





Romina Mondello consults a skeptical policeman about the strange goings-on at the museum.

CHAMBER OF HORRORS (1966) and TERROR IN THE WAX MUSEUM (1973). They also read *The Phantom of the Opera*-author Gaston Leroux's short story "The Waxwork Museum" and "The Golem" author Gustav Meyrink's "The Cabinet of Wax Figures." Out of all this research, Fulci and writer Daniele Stroppa (who had worked with the director on the scripts of his TV movie LA CASA DEGLI OROLOGI/THE HOUSE OF CLOCKS [1989] and VOCI DAL PROFONDO/ VOICES FROM THE DEEP [1990]) fashioned a new scenario that, primarily, wouldn't contravene any copyright control. For example, one of Fulci's main innovations was to make the lead protagonist a woman rather than the usually mad male artist.

The Argento-Fulci partnership wasn't all hearts and flowers, however. They did clash vehemently over the level of violence in the first draft screenplay. There wasn't enough of it for Argento's taste, and he couldn't understand why, considering Fulci's gore reputation. Argento added, "Fulci clearly wanted to make a more romantic, atmospheric piece that relied on strong passions rather than strong blood-letting." Once that deficiency had been rectified in Argento's favor, preproduction began in earnest on WAX MASK with the plan to shoot the entire movie in Turin. The sole reason for the Turin move was that Fulci had fallen in love with a location he desperately wanted to use as the wax museum exterior.

Then tragedy struck. On March 13, at the age of 68, Fulci suddenly died at home of the diabetes-related complications that had plagued his life. As a result, all work on WAX MASK was put on hold while Argento rethought his game plan. He recalled, "Suddenly, inspiration hit me. Sergio Stivaletti had been working on the special effects and knew the script inside out. He was keyed in to the spirit of the piece, too. I

thought he'd be the perfect candidate to take over the production. For five years Sergio had been saying to me if only he could find something good he'd be keen to make the transition to director. He also asked me if I would consider producing for him if I liked what he found. I did have to convince my financial partners this choice was the best one. They wanted a name director. But I finally talked them into giving Sergio a chance. 'Trust me,' I pleaded, 'I wasn't wrong about Lamberto Bava on DEMONS or Michele Soavi with THE CHURCH and THE SECT. It will work out, you'll see.'"

Sergio Stivaletti (incidentally, his surname translates as 'ankle boots'!) entered the Italian film industry in 1982 with the stop-motion special effects for Sergio Martino's ASSASSINO AL CIMITERO ETRUSCO/MURDER IN THE ETRUSCAN CEMETERY. He first worked with Argento on PHENOMENA in 1983 and has been a repertory member of his Italian crews ever since. It was Stivaletti who convinced Argento to use computer graphics for his most recent home-front success, THE STENDHAL SYNDROME. "I was shocked when Dario called and said, I have this really crazy idea—I want you to take over directing WAX MASK," remarked Stivaletti. "I had been looking for a chance to direct and thought it would be with my own film and script. But I knew with Dario producing I'd have the chance of directing something far bigger and more spectacular than I could have managed alone."

He added, "Truthfully, WAX MASK was an opportunity to direct more than something I had an interest in or desperately wanted to make. I didn't initiate this project, nor have I nurtured it along like Michele [Soavi] did with THE SECT, for example. Dario had a problem; I was in the right place at the right time; I accepted his

Hossain's climactic meltdown before (inset) and after (below).





Charles (Robert Hossein) prepares a lethal injection of his alchemical wax serum to Sonia (Romina Mondello).

offer. My next project will be far more personal." Once at the helm, however, Stivaletti did make some major revisions to Fulci and Stroppa's screenplay. He said, "Allowing for the fact you can't change that much about a basic wax museum story, I feel I've ironed out any inherent silliness and naivete. In past films, you just have dead bodies covered in wax. That's so '50s! But in reality, you could never do that—you'd have to paralyze the corpses into position or else it would be impossible to manipulate them. I wanted to come up with a feasible idea to explain how victims could first be posed and then sculpted."

In researching possible fanciful notions, Stivaletti uncovered historical information about Raimondo de Sango, Principe di San Severo, an infamous 17th century alchemist who lived in Naples. He said, "Raimondo had a reputation for using a secret magical substance to research vein circulation in the human body. Legend says he used real corpses to experiment on and was convinced he would eventually reanimate a cadaver. I turned the main WAX MASK character into a mad scientist-cum-alchemist, not the misunderstood artist of old, and had him inject a serum into his victims to immobilize them and literally turn them waxen from the inside. The WAX MASK exhibits aren't dead but kept alive by this living wax fluid that's pumped around their bodies via tubes through their feet from a huge heart-like machine in the wax museum basement. They are human robots posed, like an exoskeleton, into position by a Victorian-tech lever device."

Argento added, "Sergio has come up with some impressive additions to the screenplay making it bizarre, weird and very interesting. Fulci would have made a more traditionally obvious wax museum movie. Sergio's idea of using today's technologies with old materials only available in the late 19th century is a brilliant one. The alchemical twist in the tale is a masterstroke. WAX MASK will resemble one of those Edgar Allan Poe adaptations from the '60s or a Hammer horror or an early Mario Bava movie. It's classic with an ultra-modern sheen."

WAX MASK begins with a gory murder in a Paris hotel. A man is found by the police with his throat cut, his hand severed, and his heart torn out. They also find a young girl cowering in terror under the wardrobe—a witness to the whole shocking crime. Fast forward years later to Turin where Sonia, a seamstress, takes a job sewing costumes for the exhibits in the scary Wax Museum owned by the mysterious Boris (or Charles, depending on

whether Stivaletti or Argento wins come dubbing day. "Boris was a far more common name in France at the time," opined Stivaletti). As local people disappear, and more terrifying tableaux appear in the House of Wax, Sonia starts to become suspicious and begins investigating the enigmatic Boris. Then she meets journalist Andrea, who has been conducting his own inquiries, and together they uncover a terrifying secret. It's a secret in which Sonia herself has unknowingly played a part, and leads to the fiery climactic meltdown.

Unusually shot in the Italian language, WAX MASK stars Romina Mondello (from the miniseries NOSTROMO), Riccardo Serventi, Umberto Balli, Gabriella Giorgelli (who appeared in Umberto Lenzi's 1972 giallo SETTE ORCHIDEE MACCHiate DI ROSSO/PUZZLE OF THE SILVER HALF MOONS), and Aldo Massasso, with the central role played by veteran French actor Robert Hossein. Hossein, who starred in the 1955 caper classic RIFIFI, connects to the Argento universe in an unusual way: before Argento directed his landmark giallo THE

BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE in 1969, he earned his living writing freelance screenplays, one of which, the Spaghetti Western CIMITERO SENZA CROCI/THE ROPE AND THE COLT, was co-written and directed by Hossein in 1968.

Hossein was Fulci's suggestion, and one that pleased the French financial side, but Stivaletti would have preferred Robert Englund, star of the A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET series. "I called Robert and told him I wanted him for the role," Stivaletti recalled. "But in the end I realized it would

Actress Romina Mondello and director Sergio Stivaletti relax on the set of WAX MASK.



mean changing a lot of the script to accommodate him. Boris would have to have been far crazier, too. I had enough going on around me without any additional rewriting." Stivaletti is referring to the fact that he only had two weeks of hectic pre-production before stepping into the directing deep end. In that time he had to cast all the secondary leads, get up to speed with director of photography Sergio Salvati (Fulci's right-hand man on all his classic horrors), liaise with production designer Antonello Geleng (CEMETERY MAN) over the required Jules Verne-esque look, and ready his own Rome apartment on the Via Cola di Rienzo in the city center for principal photography.

Stivaletti's spacious penthouse apartment is built on two floors and is crammed with baroque art and priceless family heirlooms. (Stivaletti hails from a long line of very wealthy and respected dentists). It even has its own chapel and is an extraordinarily atmospheric place even by Rome's high location standards. He pointed out, "I wanted to save the production as much money as I could. My apartment fitted the design bill and couldn't have been more perfect. The joke on the picture has been that when Dario filmed DEEP RED in 1975 he had Turin stand in for Rome, whereas we are using Rome as a stand-in for Turin."

Another incredibly lucky coincidence: Four months prior to the July start date, Stivaletti had leased a studio building in the Rome suburbs on the Via Tor Cervara. He said, "I've been using the first floor of my apartment as a workshop ever since I began in the industry, and I needed somewhere with more space, a place where I could shoot my opticals in more comfort. Of course, as it turned out, I couldn't have moved in at a more opportune time. The studio has been perfect for the WAX MASK interiors." It's here that the underground set containing Boris' vat of molten wax serum has been built along with the main exhibition corridor of the wax museum itself.

The exhibits in the wax museum depict tableaux taken from mythology, legend, and murderous history. There's Perseus slaying Medusa, Dante's Inferno, Saint George and the Dragon, a grisly disemboweling torture, Jack the Ripper, and a French Revolution guillotine. Look closely at the severed head in the basket below the guillotine's blade, and you'll see it's Tom Savini, the special effects supervisor on Argento's two American-based productions TWO

"Past films just had bodies covered in wax," said Stivaletti. "I wanted to come up with a feasible idea to explain how victims could be sculpted."



Director Sergio Stivaletti prepares a hypodermic needle containing the alchemical serum that embalms its living victims into posable wax statues.

EVIL EYES and TRAUMA. The production used a Savini head-cast for one of the many typical in-jokes WAX MASK contains. Another exhibit recreates the opening savage murder scene in the film itself—the clue to the whole mystery of the wax museum and its evil owner.

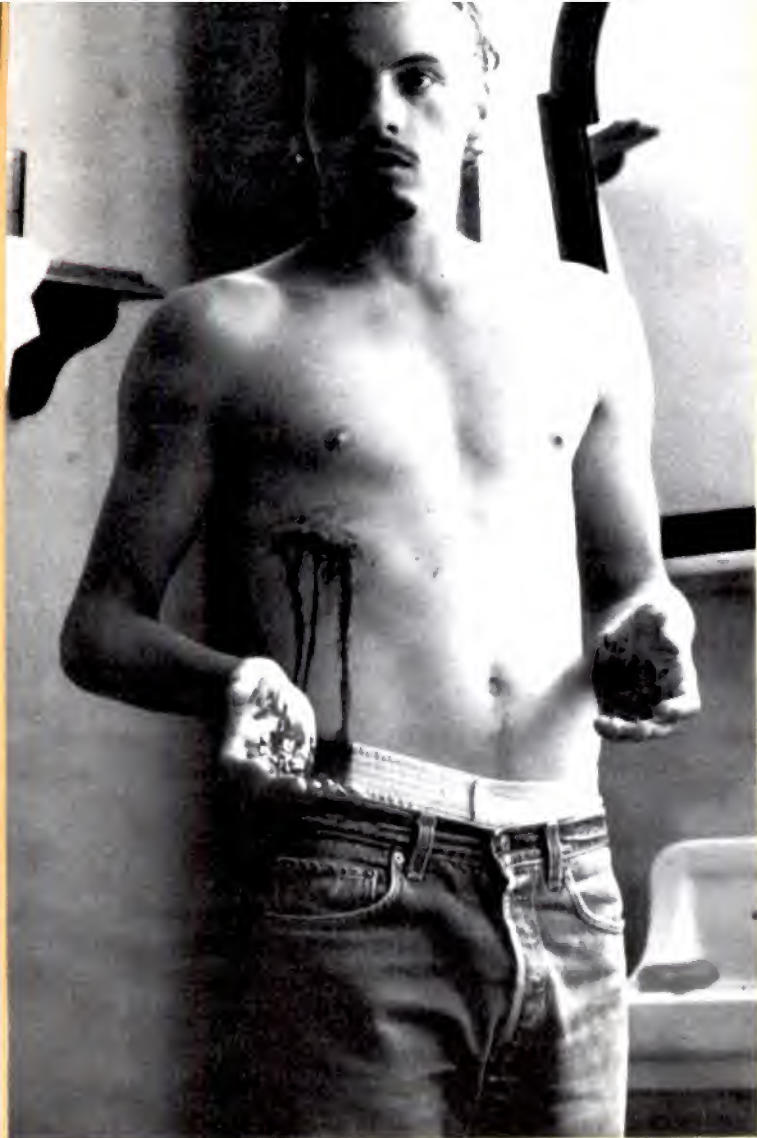
Obviously, once Stivaletti took over the directing reins, he relinquished his special effects supervisor post. While Stivaletti's 14-man crew remained intact—including his two core technicians, Barbara Morosetti and Francesca Romana Dinnunzio—he drafted French make-up artist Benoit Lestang with whom he'd worked on THE CHURCH. Lestang began his career with Jean Rollin's THE LIVING DEAD GIRL (1982), BABY BLOOD (1990), and more recently worked on the high profile French movies THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN and the extraterrestrial comedy LA BELLE VERTE/THE FINE GREEN. Lestang said, "My responsibilities were upped once I arrived, and we all realized what an enormous workload WAX MASK represented. Our main task was how to create things differently from the millions of wax museum movies everyone has already seen. We've spent a lot of time experimenting with transparent resins rather than foam latex to give our wax figures an unusual look. The resin is translucent, and it looks so much more like flesh on screen than rubber."

He added, "Five characters become wax models during the course of the film and

our main job has been to make sure the statues look exactly like the actors. I also think we've made things neatly and in a precise way to give a quality finish. We've all been under a great deal of pressure to deliver in a short time, but I feel we've done that. Naturally, shop window dummies have been of enormous help, time-wise, in crafting the exhibition figures. Apart from the standard gore effects in the opening murder, we've spent a lot of time on the finale involving Boris's bodily destruction down to a cyber-wax TERMINATOR-like skeleton. Robert Hossein hates anything to do with make-up, so Mischa Koopman [who wore the Dream Devil suit in THE STENDHAL SYNDROME] is doubling for him. Also the latest digital technology is being used to show human victims being morphed into wax exhibits. I've been so impressed by the way Sergio has been directing, which makes me think WAX MASK won't be the usual Italian schlock."

But how does Stivaletti himself rate his directing? "Well, I'm aiming for a classical style with lots of camera movement. I love steadicam and tracking shots, but my style has been somewhat dictated by time a great deal. Some shots I originally planned to be quite complicated, I've had to simplify out of scheduling necessity. I've found it quite easy dealing with the actors. Dealing with Dario is another matter. Contractually, he has to be on the set at all times in case I screw up, but it's not easy having a great director like Dario watching your every move and seeing all your mistakes. After WAX MASK, I can either do anything or nothing at all!"

Argento might be watching Stivaletti's every move like a hawk, but he has nothing but praise for what the clearly talented young director is achieving. "I couldn't be more pleased with Sergio," he enthused. "He's certainly proving that my faith in him was warranted. The rushes are spectacular, and it looks very rich in style and atmosphere." Argento, whose next project is GASTON LEROUX'S PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, sees WAX MASK as a prime example of what he terms 'Horror 2000.' He explained, "It's all about the strong emotions and primal passions viewers get when they see a classical subject wrapped up in a thoroughly modern exterior. It's a mixture of the sentimental old with the millennium new that will cause fresh fear and unfamiliar tension. WAX MASK signals a new dawn for the fantasy film, hence 'Horror 2000.'" □



TOUCH

Paul Schrader adapts Elmore Leonard's quirky novel of faith & healing.

By David Skal

The screenwriter of such modern classics as *TAXI DRIVER* and *RAGING BULL* and the director of *HARDCORE*, *MISHIMA*, and others, Paul Schrader is best known for his dark, cathartic, frequently controversial visions, occasionally crossing the line between secular parables of metaphysical redemption and frightening fantasy—a quality best displayed in his stylish remake of Val Lewton's *CAT PEOPLE*.

Schrader's newest film as writer-director is *TOUCH*, based on Elmore Leonard's 1987 novel (written in 1977 but not considered commercially viable until the success of his bestsellers *Glitz* and *Bandits*). It is a quirky story of a sensitive ex-monk named Juvenal (Skeet Ulrich), who quietly plies his skills as a stigmata-manifesting healer from the relative obscurity of a Los Angeles rehab center. When a pair of opportunists, a cynical religious promoter (Christopher Walken) and a fundamentalist crackpot (Tom Arnold) go to war over the exploitation rights to Juvenal's gifts, an inevitable 1990s media circus ensues. The cast includes Bridget Fonda (who begins as Walken's accomplice and ends up as Juvenal's lover), Janeane Garofalo, Gina Gershon, Paul Mazursky, and Lolita Davidovitch.

Schrader acknowledged that *TOUCH* indeed touches upon hallmarks themes of his career, including his pre-directorial career as a film critic. His 1972 book *Transcendental Style in Film* urged a spiritual, universalist approach to film appreciation that challenged auteurist, cult-of-personality criticism. But this time out, he said, "It's purely coincidental that the material was re-

ligious in nature, even though I've done a number of things in the religious vein. I had been a fan of Leonard's stuff and told my agency how much I liked his work. This was the one book he'd done with a religious background. And in making the film I tried to stay more true to Leonard's sensibility."

In his introduction to the novel, Leonard described the book as a tale of "mystical things happening to an ordinary person in a contemporary setting. It's way-off-trail compared to what I usually write, but it shouldn't be mystifying unless you look for symbols, hidden meanings. *Touch* is about accepting what is. Abiding with the facts. Nothing more." Schrader kept with the novelist's intentions, saying: "I didn't go out of my way to emphasize the metaphorical quality of the title. To be honest, one of the problems the film faces in the marketplace is that it doesn't tell you what to feel or think at any given juncture. It plays very much by Elmore Leonard's rules. It's very tongue-in-cheek—throwing the sacred and

the profane together, tooth and jowl, and saying to the audience, 'You figure it out.' So you'll go right from the most sacred thing to the most scabrous dialogue, and I find that kind of great fun."

TOUCH began as a project for Miramax before landing at Lumiere, the production company responsible for *LEAVING LAS VEGAS*. The mix of religious and secular themes made the film a difficult sell. "The problem was the tone," said Schrader, "and I suspect that will bedevil the film all through its theatrical and video life. You have healing and stigmata, and on the other hand it's a comedy and a love story. So, what is it? Please tell us. Make it clear for us. And the film really doesn't tell you what it is, because it's all and both. The unfortunate truth is that movies that tend to be successful are movies that don't leave anything up to the viewer, movies that tell you exactly how you're supposed to feel at any given moment and reward you for feeling the way you're told to feel."





Tom Arnold plays the laughably serious founder of Organization Unifying Traditional Rites as God Expects.

The huge success of another Elmore Leonard adaptation, *GET SHORTY*, coupled with a (today) very reasonable Hollywood budget of \$5.5 million, finally clinched the deal. But casting proved tricky. Said Schrader, "The roles could be played by any number of actors; you could go in many directions with these roles. So for every actor I had a big list. The hard part is to mix and match parts. At one point, Tim Robbins was going to do the role that Tom Arnold plays, and Tim had convinced me that the character wasn't a snotty little villain like he's written in the book, but is just a big kid. Against Tim I had cast Bob Hoskins in the role that Chris Walken plays. When the film moved from Miramax to Lumiere, Tim was no longer available. So I started looking around for another big kid, and I ended up with Tom Arnold, who's probably the biggest kid of all. But then Bob Hoskins didn't want to do it—you can't put Tom and Bob together because they're working off the same energy source. Then Chris Walken, who's a good friend of

Opposite page: top, Skeet Ulrich, as faith healer Juvenal, manifests stigmata; bottom: Bridget Fonda and Christopher Walken co-star as would-be exploiters of Juvenal. Below: Paul Schrader directs Fonda.



mine, who I had always thought to be a little too much teeth-and-elbows for this movie—I thought, 'Wait a second: if I have Tom Arnold, I can ask Chris now, because there's nothing Chris can do to Tom.' They're acting from different universes."

Arnold's performance in particular may surprise audiences who still think of him as "Mr. Roseanne." Schrader is particularly happy with the actor's fully-developed portrait of August Murray, the deadly serious albeit laughable founder of an acronymous movement called *OUTRAGE* (Organization Unifying Traditional Rites As God Expects). "Tom is such a hectic, hyperactive character that I was surprised at how much homework he had done." Though Arnold does not have formal acting training, Schrader noted, "Growing up in Iowa, he did local theatre, and then he did stand-up comedy. And that's pretty good training, to be honest."

The passive, eye-of-the-storm quality of Juvenal's character made the casting of the pivotal role a special challenge. But Ulrich finally made the director's job easy. "Basically, he walked in the room and he read. It was a very difficult role to cast because the character is so passive. How do you keep this character from 'going beige' on you? Because an actor can't juice up the role. And if you play into the passivity, he disappears. But Skeet had something—an acetic look. My first reaction was: he will keep you interested without violating the character."

Writing the script, Schrader didn't find it necessary to do much research into faith healing beyond the text of Leonard's novel. His own religious upbringing was fairly antithetical to the concept. "My religious background was pretty much the other sort—Dutch Calvinism, all mind and no body, where basically you're supposed to think your

“You have healing and stigmata, and it's a comedy and a love story. So, what is it? The film doesn't tell you, because it's all and both.”

—Director Paul Schrader—

self to heaven.” (Interesting enough, Schrader's Calvinist family discouraged him from seeing movies as a child. Later, his father actively protested the hometown showing of *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*, which Schrader scripted for Martin Scorsese.)

While awaiting the release of *TOUCH*, Schrader is completing a screenplay for Paramount and Sharon Stone on the life of tobacco heiress Doris Duke. After that: "The same week that *TOUCH* comes out, I start shooting a film called *AFFLICTION* from a novel by Russell Banks, with Nick Nolte, James Coburn, and Willem Dafoe. It's a strong piece of material, about a small town cop who thinks he's solving a murder when in fact he's going crazy. It's sort of nice to slip back into something very gritty." In the meantime, audiences will have the opportunity to sample a friendlier kind of film from a director best-known for his excursions into darkness.

Darkness Lite, anyone? □

Arnold's fundamentalist crackpot (below) fights Christopher Walken's cynical religious promoter over exploitation rights to Juvenal's gifts.



CRIMETIME

The director of THE VANISHING returns to psycho-terror with this futuristic satire.

By Alan Jones

He provided one of the most memorable shock climaxes in recent genre history with his disturbing portrait of a serial killer in *THE VANISHING/SPOORLOOS* (1988), which he remade five years later in Hollywood. Now Dutch director George Sluizer returns to the Hitchcockian psychological thriller arena eager to chill anew with the futuristic satire *CRIMETIME*, a \$6-million co-production between Focus Films, Kinowelt and Pandora Cinema, produced by David Pupkewitz and executive produced by Sluizer himself. Starring Stephen Baldwin, Pete Postlethwaite, Geraldine Chaplin, Sadie Frost, and Karen Black, Sluizer's latest study in lethal obsession began an eight week shoot at London's Twickenham Studios on August 31, 1995, for Stateside release by Trimark.

The youngest of the four Baldwin brothers plays out-of-work actor Bobby Mahon, suddenly catapulted to stardom when he takes on the role of a serial killer in a top-rated crime reenactment show on British television. While Bobby preoccupies himself with the realistic mechanics of murder, Sidney, the real killer (Postlethwaite), is seduced by the TV glamorization of his crimes and by the winning personality Bobby creates, with dangerous repercussions for both them and their close associates. The sixty-three year old director said, "CRIMETIME is a journey into a tabloid world where perceptions of reality get confused. Although there seems to be a spate of movies with similar themes at the moment, like *TO DIE FOR*, and what with the whole O.J. Simpson media circus, the movie is set in Tomorrow Land more than the future. If it's Monday today, I'd say it was Tuesday on *CRIMETIME*. And if it's released mid 1996, I'd say it was set late 1996."

CRIMETIME finds Sluizer behind a camera for the first time since the traumatic events he went through two years ago when



Previously out of work, actor Bobby Mahon (Stephen Baldwin) achieves fame and fortune when he rises to stardom for his portrayal of the real life killer.

River Phoenix died while shooting *DARK BLOOD*, causing the film's irrevocable cancellation. He views this new excursion into the deadly recesses of the deranged mind as an exorcism of the personal demons he acquired coping with that emotional distress. "I've been offered many projects in that time, but nothing really stimulated me enough," he said. "Then screenwriter Brendan Somers submitted *CRIMETIME*, and I agreed to direct because I was interested in the characters. Both Bobby and Sidney, like Raymond Lemorne in *THE VANISHING Mark One*, are looking for how far they can go for entirely different reasons. Bobby's prime question is: If you are a method actor playing a killer, how much do you have to get into his skin, and where do you draw the research line? Sidney has been driven insane by his wife's illness, and his fatal flaw is contacting Bobby to tell him he's getting his portrayal wrong. He so wants the sort of fame Bobby is getting, he starts murdering his victims in the style of the TV show. It's that blurring of murderous realities I find intriguing."

The subtext contained in *CRIMETIME* would seem to concur with current notions regarding violent images on television causing violent behavior. Sluizer scoffed at this question and remarked, "That may well be

in the script, but I certainly don't believe it myself. I can direct a love story without necessarily believing in love. Bad education, social and political problems cause violence, not anything seen in movie theaters or on TV. I'm not saying no one can be influenced by them—someone, somewhere can be influenced by anything—but they are not the basic cause. I'm out to explore why our natural instincts seem to be confused and our behavior determined, not just by an intrusive media, but by everything automated. The more images we have pumped at us, from TV, CD-ROM, computer screens, bank cash dispensers,

and even flight information monitors at airports, the more they touch hitherto untouchable parts of our lives. I'm looking at another vanishing; the disappearance of our moral borderlines."

Not that Sluizer watches the sort of true-life crime shows on television he savages satirically in *CRIMETIME*. "I find them boring," he remarked. "I watched the O.J. Simpson trial for five minutes to gauge my reaction and rapidly lost interest. My fascination is pinpointed on how people make money on crime. One of my personal observations is I hope criminal behavior and murder goes on the increase because, for every person who kills someone, it gives at least one thousand people a job. Doctors, police departments, ambulance men, nurses, undertakers, hospital staff, and priests are all in the murder business. So if you are against unemployment, you are for killing. It's that dark sense of morbid humour I'm putting in *CRIMETIME*."

Image Animation are supplying Sluizer with the prosthetics to ensure the jarring scenes of vicious violence are as realistic as possible. But like Hitchcock, who a resigned Sluizer is always being compared to, the director pointed out he's really only interested in suggestion to force the audience to discover the real horror within themselves. He added, "The violence you see in *CRIME-*



Stephen Baldwin stars as an actor playing a serial killer on a tabloid television re-enactment program.

TIME will all be in the imagination. That's where I will put the murder weapon and the pain. Yes, there's a graphic throat-slitting but you only see one drop of blood. My overriding concern with the murder scenes is to make the real ones worse than the TV reenactments, but then leave you with the unsettling thought that the latter representations are more shocking for being so acceptably sanitized. The moments where nothing happens are the ones in which I want everything to happen in your mind."

Sluizer observed, "You know, there's more freedom in Europe when it comes to the issues of sex and violence. I can have more violence here than in the States, where making a studio film means you have no power whatsoever unless your name is Steven Spielberg. The Americans always exaggerate everything to a fascist degree. If you are anti-smoking, you have to be a total maniac about it. If you are anti-violence, every aspect of the media must be censored! There's very little common sense applied to those important issues and rarely any intelligence employed to discuss them sensibly."

An intelligent, if bleak, reality—virtually absent from the chillers America offers as cathartic vehicles—is what Sluizer feels separates his movies from the rest. He said, "I like to think my work springs from enlightened sources and deals with philosophical reflections on elements of society. All my movies focus on obsession, even UTZ [the release sandwiched between THE VANISHINGS] had an obsessive collector driven to murder to get the last piece of a priceless collection. It's the recurring theme in my work, but it can get boring unless you develop it in diverse ways. CRIMETIME embroiders on the thread by comparing the images projected by Bobby and Sidney to who they really are and who they want to be. People think I'm strange. I do have this

weird reputation for being odd, mostly colored by the movies I've made, I think. But I'm as ordinary as the next person, and it's those perceptions I'm addressing here."

One of the reasons why Sluizer has a reputation for being difficult is that he's a perfectionist in every artistic area. He explained, "Perfectionism is a dirty word these days. It's expensive, and you're a nutcase if you're known as one. Craftsmanship is out of favor and sadly isn't considered a quality anymore, only an inconvenience. But I see it as part of my job to put in the time to get the details exactly right. Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu [the actor in THE VANISHING Mark One] called me the most meticulous director he's ever worked with and the most exasperating because of it!" Casting is of vital importance to Sluizer. Although he wanted John Turturro, Alan Rickman, and Bren-

“Paul Verhoeven has fitted the film industry around his style. I don't want to do that. My own obsessions are far too extreme for Hollywood.”

—Director George Sluizer—

da Fricker for his dream CRIMETIME cast, budget restrictions meant he settled for Baldwin, Postlethwaite, and Chaplin. He added, "But once I've chosen the best people I can get for the money available, I stand behind every choice out of respect for the financiers. I always try for an interrelated cast who mean something above their individual talents as an ensemble. I like working with actors, and they all respond to that dedication. Even though I say it myself, every actor is good under my direction."

George Sluizer followed in the footsteps of other Dutch directors like Paul Verhoeven, Dick Maas and, more recently, Jan De Bont in having been taken seriously by Hollywood. However, Sluizer called himself "too wise and too old to be absorbed by Tinseltown's ethics. Working there is fine, if impersonal, but that's what you have to do sometimes if you belong to the entertainment world. I prefer a European atmosphere and houses built on solid foundations to Coca-Cola and gas stations! Realistically, I know I don't have a future there. Paul Verhoeven is very clever. He's fitted the film industry around his own style and tastes. I can't, and don't particularly want to, do that. I feel my own obsessions, filmic and otherwise, are far too extreme for Hollywood confinement." □

Pete Postlethwaite plays the real killer, who begins committing murders in the style of his TV alter ego.



STAR WARS

THE SPECIAL EDITION TRILOGY

The original films are revamped and upgraded for re-release.

Shortly after STAR WARS opened in 1977 and was well on its way to becoming the world's biggest boxoffice hit up to that time, George Lucas was already having second thoughts about the quality of the effects work. He told *Rolling Stone* writer Paul Scanlon, "There is nothing that I would like to do more than go back and re-do all the special effects in STAR WARS, having a little more time." Now, 20 years later Lucas has finally brought his wish to fruition, joining the ranks of filmmakers like Steven Spielberg and James Cameron, who command the clout or resources to rework their films into special editions. Ostensibly, these enhanced movies come closer to matching the original intentions of the director, although in the case of STAR WARS, it likely is also a shrewd financial move that will bring in millions of dollars to Lucasfilm, both at the box-office and in renewed licensing fees. Lucasfilm has already announced a huge promotional deal with Pepsi Cola that will

provide \$150 million in tie-in advertising for the reissue of the three original STAR WARS movies and the first prequel.

When the force returns to theaters on January 31, STAR WARS will have four and a half minutes of new material. Lucasfilm says about 100 effects shots have been re-done or enhanced using ILM's astounding digital effects, under the supervision of Dennis Muren and producer Tom Kennedy. Among the most significant additions are a sequence wherein Jabba the Hut confronts Han Solo in the Mos Eisley spaceport. Unlike the animatronic version of Jabba that was designed by Phil Tippett for RETURN OF THE JEDI, the new Jabba is a complete CGI creation, allowing greater freedom of movement than was previously possible. The new Jabba will be compos-

by
Lawrence French

ited into original footage of Harrison Ford that was shot in 1976, when an actor in costume served as Jabba. While the basic design of Jabba remains the same, he appears slightly slimmer than his massive bulk in RETURN OF THE JEDI, and like Harryhausen's Medusa in CLASH OF THE TITANS, he is able to slither around in a slug-like fashion.

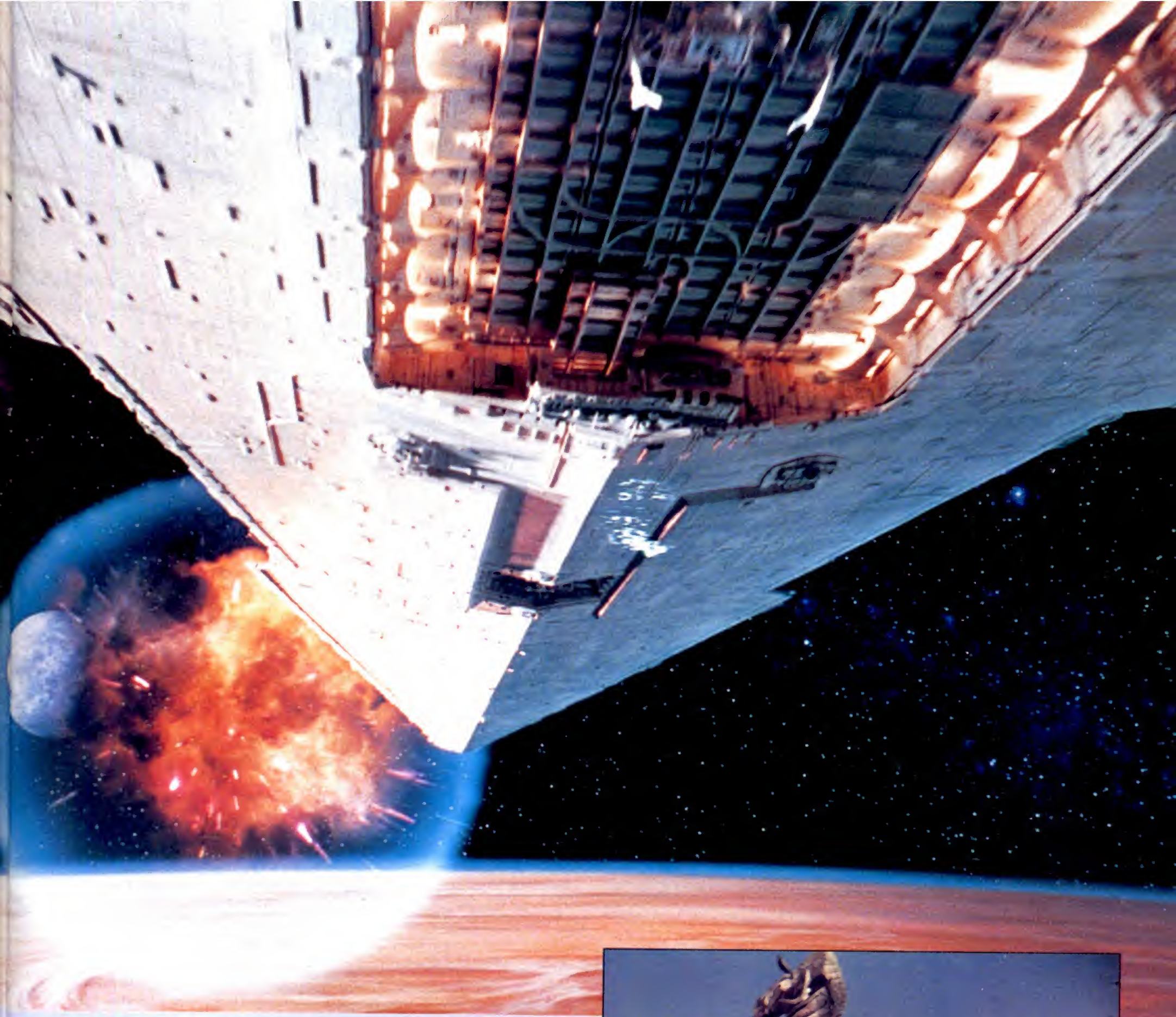
The famous Cantina scene will also get a complete makeover, as Lucas was never happy with it, since he had only \$20,000 at his disposal to try to make it work. Lucas told *Rolling Stone's* Scanlon, "We ended up having to cut out half of what we wanted, but it was sufficient. I really wanted to have horrible, crazy, really staggering monsters. I guess we got some, but we didn't come off as well as I had hoped."

Luke and Obi-One Kenobi's arrival by landspeeder at the Mos Eisley spaceport will be enlivened with a more extensive group of background creatures, including Jawas riding on the back of a Ronto, a large di-

No, that's not the memorable opening sequence of STAR WARS.

nosaur-like animal similar to a Brontosaurus. When a Swoop on a speederbike crosses in front of the Ronto, it rears up on its hind legs and dumps its two Jawa passengers in the street. The Millennium Falcon blasting out of Mos Eisley has also been redone, with more ships added to the pursuit, and a new more spectacular effect for the jump to lightspeed.

New footage was shot in the Yuma desert for an expansion of the sequence in which stormtroopers first land on Tatooine in search of the missing droids R2-D2 and C-3PO. The brief shot in the original



This is a re-creation in **SPECIAL EFFECTS**, which documents the refurbishment for the film's re-release. Inset: new **STAR WARS** footage of Mos Eisley.

film showed a stormtrooper mounted on a stationary Dewback lizard. That will be replaced with a new CGI version, allowing the creature to be completely ambulatory. The Banthas used by the sandpeople will also be replaced by CGI versions. The stop-motion chess game played by Chewbacca and R2-D2, originally devised by Phil Tippett and Jon Berg, may also be replaced by CGI. It's a thought that doesn't please Tippett. "My fear is they're replacing it all," said Tippett. "If they replace all my stuff I won't go see it. Other people will go first and let me know, but I have no

idea what they're doing on the film. I think they started doing a lot of work on it right after we finished **JURASSIC PARK**."

One scene that Lucas isn't restoring is a brief reunion between Luke and his best friend Biggs Darklighter, who is about to leave Tatooine to join the rebellion against the Empire. Lucas cut the scene shortly before the film's initial release, feeling it upset the movie's carefully worked out rhythm, as well as causing the film to run past his preferred running time of two hours. Apparently, Lucas still feels the scene doesn't work, since he has once more decided



against including it.

The film's final battle over the death star will get major attention, to remove matte lines and add new ships. Explosions and laserblasts have been digitally re-done to appear seamlessly integrated throughout the film. In addition, the soundtrack will be completely upgraded for

crystal clear reproduction in the Dolby digital format, with stereo surround sound. In 1977 Lucas said he fell far short of what he wanted **STAR WARS** to be, accomplishing only 25% of what he set out to achieve. In 1997 Lucas feels he's reached almost 100% of what he began "a long time ago..." □



Old footage of Harrison Ford as Han Solo has been composited with CGI, so that the abandoned scene of his confrontation with Jabba the Hut (mentioned but not seen in the original cut) can be reinstated. Burt devised Jabba's voice.



STAR WARS

BEN BURTT

Sound designer redoes his Oscar-winning work.

By Frank Garcia

How often do many of us receive an opportunity to relive a glorious moment of our lifetime? For Benjamin Burtt Jr., the STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION trilogy is such a chance. In 1975, Ben Burtt was a graduate film student at the University of Southern California, where he was found by writer-director George Lucas and producer Gary Kurtz, who hired him "to collect sounds" to be used in a little esoteric space fantasy. In 1977, Burtt won a special achievement Academy Award for creating and designing the alien, creature, and robot voices for STAR WARS.

This time around, Burtt has at his fingertips the latest digital sound technology which will once again transport audiences into another galaxy far, far

away. "I think when I first heard they were going to redesign STAR WARS, I had an attitude, 'Gee, didn't it work right before? Why fool with it?'" said Burtt. "So, I felt a little skeptical about it, only because I thought, 'Well, there's plenty of new frontiers to cover. Should we necessarily go back and revisit the old one?'"

George Lucas has invested more than \$10 million into restoring the quality of the film print and enhancing and updating as many as 100 to 150 individual visual effects shots in each of the three films. In the case of STAR WARS, and perhaps RETURN OF THE JEDI, unused footage will also be reinstated. Plus, the soundtrack will be digitally remastered to meet today's theatrical stereo standards. Of the three films, STAR WARS will have the

greatest renovation, with an extra four minutes added.

In the course of making the decision to return Lucasfilm's crown jewels to the movie theaters, ostensibly to reintroduce the saga to a new generation of movie-goers, Lucas has created something of a controversy among fans. One view is that the Special Editions are tinkering with cherished memories of the STAR WARS saga as it was originally presented; many fans don't want Lucas to interfere with that memory by trying to improve what is already considered a "classic." The counter-view is that the film belongs to Lucas, and his goals are to take today's state-of-the-art technology and give a presentation that's closer to his original vision than was possible in 1977.

"As I worked on it—I hadn't really looked or listened to

STAR WARS for a number of years—I got excited about it!" admitted Burtt. "I began to see the results one could have by rethinking some of the material, and I changed my mind. I thought, 'You know, it's George Lucas's film. He's still the creator and the filmmaker. It's not like he's handing it to someone else generations later to reinterpret it. Why not redo it?'"

Burtt argues that, if STAR WARS was released today intact, the film's age could become apparent. "It might seem a little crude or ragged if we hadn't done it. In many ways STAR WARS is a memory, and we remember the impression of what it looked and sounded like 20 years ago. With this remixing and remastering of it, it meets your expectations now."

Perhaps speaking for many of his colleagues, including Em-

STAR WARS

LEIGH BRACKETT

The late space opera author inspired the original and scripted the sequel.

peror Lucas, Burt remarked, "My experience as a filmmaker is that quite often when a film is done, you look at the things you achieve, but you also see the things you didn't achieve. Part of growing up as a filmmaker is knowing when to let go and not fuss with it, so you can move on. But, it's always there, nagging at you. There's a percentage of things that didn't work and I wish I had another chance to get right." With this goal, Burt returned to Skywalker Sound, and began reviewing the work his younger self had completed two decades ago. Among the challenges was researching unused cues from an extensive sound library culled over the years and "being consistent with my style of 20 years ago while working from my old STAR WARS tapes."

Fans can expect additional aural surprises including "some new creature voices and some new vehicle sounds." In fact, a creature glimpsed only briefly in the original will gain greater prominence this time around. "The dewbacks have brand new sounds," said Burt. These are the strange Tatooine creatures that Imperial Stormtroopers use for transportation while on the desert planet. This scene can be viewed in the Ben Burt-directed IMAX film SPECIAL EFFECTS currently playing in many IMAX theaters across the country. (See page 38.)

Beyond specific sounds, Burt's job at Skywalker Sound is also to restore the overall sound quality of the film as it is presented in the movie theater. "One of the things we did, in a perfect digital transfer from our original mix, is recreate the surround tracks of the whole movie. Nowadays, you can have those stereo—in other words, left and right surround behind the audience, split between two channels. You have sound at the back and in the corners of the theater. So, if a spaceship comes from the far left corner of the room, it can move to the back and to the front. STAR WARS kind of started the style that led to that sound system. It's fitting that we try to reshape the sound field around the audience and utilize the sound

Leigh Brackett was a driving force in science fiction circles, creating imaginative forays into other worlds with tight, exciting narratives that continue to thrill readers today. She was also a multi-faceted writer who not only crossed the diverse genres of space opera and hard-boiled detective fiction with ease, but also crossed mediums, having worked on the screenplays of numerous Hollywood classics, including THE BIG SLEEP.

Long-time fan George Lucas turned to Brackett to script THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, relying on her deft handling of character development within the framework of action-oriented space opera, a sub-genre Brackett mastered long before the title became derogatory. Brackett was only able to finish a first draft of what was still called STAR WARS II in 1978 before her death at the age of 63.

On October 22, 1977, less than a year before her death, Brackett answered questions at the Octocon in Santa Rosa, California, on the nature of her work and the importance of science fiction in modern society. During this talk, she discussed STAR WARS, a space opera very similar in certain respects to Brackett's own work. She commented on that fact:

"I think that this is because Lucas cut his eye teeth on science fiction; he's been reading it for years and years. He's one of the few in



Above: Darth Vader in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. Leigh Brackett, one of Lucas's inspirations for STAR WARS, wrote the first draft of the sequel's script.

Hollywood who knows science fiction. Not 'maybe he's read one book by Isaac Asimov or one by Heinlein,' but he's read the whole field, and he came to it knowing all the things to throw in, the stuff which is all a part of the matrix. And he threw it all in with no apologies whatsoever.

"Oddly enough, I'm very happy to say, it turns out that Mr. Lucas is quite an old fan of mine. It was just a great film, I thought; just beautiful. He didn't try to teach anybody anything; it's not beating people over the head with what terrible people they are and how they're ruining the environment, or telling us we must all get

down and wallow in our shame and beat our breasts. With no apologies to anybody, he just took us back 'a long time ago' to 'a galaxy far, far away,' and did one hell of a rousing adventure story. Beautiful! So much of it was 'throw away' lines or shots. You know... momentary shot of a skeleton of a sand-worm; 'Hello, Frank Herbert.'"

Brackett saluted Lucas' tributes to the history of the science fiction he had read, feeling the best elements of a number of popular SF works were put together in the director's own unique way—which many other producers just could not have accomplished. "I did a script," she explained of her own experience in Hollywood, "and actually got something that I was pleased with. But I discovered [producers] don't know anything about sci-

ence fiction. They're afraid of it. They just wanted a good, warm family picture. Science fictional, but no monsters, no hardware, no spaceships; in other words, nothing science fictional; just a good, warm family story. It was hard to do. Every time I'd throw in something that was the least bit technical, I'd get, 'Oh, the audience isn't going to understand that.' They'd be surprised, because the audience is generally miles ahead of them. I think STAR WARS is a great thing, and I think STAR TREK is a great thing, too. Perhaps it's gotten to be a little too much of a cult item, though."

Fred Szebin

STAR WARS

SOUNDTRAX

Music from "a long time ago" became fashionable again.

By Randall Larson

Take a voyage to a moment long ago and far, far away. Back to 1977, to a Hollywood that existed far from what we know today. Long before Lucasfilm, before Skywalker Ranch, before Yoda boxer shorts.

By the late 1960s, the Golden Age of motion picture music was a dim memory. The orchestral styles that had defined Hollywood music since the 1930s had been replaced by pop and rock scores designed to appeal to the youth demographic that comprised the largest segment of the ticket-buying audience. '60s pictures like *THE GRADUATE*, *EASY RIDER*, and *BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID* became the influences of movie music in the '70s as producers quickly correlated song scores with record sales.

There were exceptions—composers who successfully withstood the commercial influence of pop and some who even used it to their advantage within an otherwise symphonic idiom. Science fiction and fantasy films of the period tended to ride the fence. Scores like Bernard Herrmann's *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* were lavishly orchestrated, while Leonard Rosenman's *FANTASTIC VOYAGE*, Jerry Goldsmith's *PLANET OF THE APES*, and Peter Schickele's *SILENT RUNNING* used orchestral instru-



STAR WARS' space opera adventure was enhanced by John Williams (l) music that revived Hollywood interest in symphonic scores for film.

ments to create unique musical atmospheres far removed from traditional symphonics. But there were also dozens of scores like *BARBARELLA* (Charles Fox, pop), *SON OF DRACULA* (Harry Nilsson, rock musical), *BLACULA* (Gene Page, soul music), *DRACULA A.D.* 1972 (Michael Vickers, rock), *LAST DAYS OF MAN ON EARTH* (Beaver & Krause, folk/rock) in which the primary purpose of the music—usually used to accentuate the audience's emotional connection to the images presented on screen—was abandoned in favor of a toe-tapping rhythm often out of sync with the film's dramatic tempo.

The state of film music by 1976 was bleak indeed. (Herrmann, who had composed many of cinema's finest scores, said in 1970, "If I were starting now, I'd have no career in

films.") So in 1977 along comes George Lucas and his outer space saga, *STAR WARS*, which featured a symphonic score performed by no less than the 110-piece London Symphony Orchestra and recorded in Dolby stereo, which in the mid-1970s was still quite an innovation. This gave the film's soundtrack an enhanced quality hitherto unheard in theaters. The double-record soundtrack album became the highest-selling orchestral soundtrack to date (over 4,000,000 copies).

The influence John Williams' *STAR WARS* music had upon film scoring in general was even more profound than the film had upon movie making. It allowed for the resurgence of the symphonic score as a viably powerful form of movie music. "Suddenly music

continued on page 60

speakers more significantly than they were in the first film."

Beyond the desire to seek perfection, the reworking also serves as a rehearsal for the technology. Burt explained, "Many of these new technical processes were explored during the *YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES*. That's why I'm so excited about these techniques. It's a proving ground for the next films. You have to decide how expensive is it now to do a shot with a spaceship. Is it a model? Should it be CGI? Should it be a composite? In doing this work, I think updating the films is helping Lucasfilm in some respects retrain itself to look upon the creation of many technical effects in new ways."

It is well known that George Lucas felt somewhat "baffled" by the success of *STAR WARS*, because he was working under such difficult conditions, both physical and budgetary. Lucas has even declared that the film was merely a low percentage of what was envisioned in his mind's eye. "Most of us that worked on the show were kind of incredulous because we did see what was achieved," recalled Burt. "I remember George at that time saying, 'Yeah, there were some things that didn't come out right.' I could hardly understand why he said that, because it was a huge success. I think he's always had a desire to add a few things to bring that film to completion. And that's what he's done!"

Bringing about that completion for *STAR WARS* involved a new scene with Jabba the Hutt, for which "we're creating his voice and so on." Burt is referring to the filmed but unused encounter at the Millennium Falcon hangar docking bay between Han Solo and Jabba, who was originally humanoid in appearance but will now resemble the figure eventually seen in *RETURN OF THE JEDI*.

Additions like this will connect the film better to its sequels. "That's another reason the new versions are important

STAR WARS

LAWRENCE KASDAN

Scripting familiar characters in new jeopardy.

When George Lucas decided to follow up STAR WARS, he passed the scripting duties to one of his inspirations, Leigh Brackett, who had not only penned some of the most entertaining stories of the form before 'space opera' became a derivative term, but had also worked in Hollywood, co-scripting such classic westerns as RIO BRAVO, EL DORADO, and RIO LOBO. Brackett finished a first draft script before she passed away in the spring of 1978. To fill the void, Lucas turned to Lawrence Kasdan, who would later become a writer-director on his own, with BODY HEAT, THE BIG CHILL, GRAND CANYON, and WYATT EARP. By the summer of 1978, Kasdan had just completed his script for RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK when Lucas told him that they were in trouble on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. Sets had to begin construction soon, and the script had yet to be completed.

"I went away on vacation, came back, and began work on EMPIRE," Kasdan recalled. "What I worked from was a draft of the script George had written, based on the story George had given to Leigh. I don't know what of Leigh's draft survived into the draft George wrote. What George handed me was a very rough first draft, really somewhere between an outline and a first draft. The structure of the story was all there—it was the skeleton for a movie. What was needed was the flesh and muscle."

Kasdan admitted to having no real affinity with science fiction or fantasy but feels that's not what Lucas was looking for in a writer anyway. "I think the reason George was interested in my writing the script was that all my original screenplays are people stories. Some are romantic comedies, some are thrillers, but they're all based on character. George wanted EMPIRE to be more of a character piece, and it is. He wanted it to be more complex emotionally and it is. He felt I could give those things to it. In ad-



Re-writing Leigh Brackett's EMPIRE STRIKES BACK script, Lawrence Kasdan (inset) lent a sense of jeopardy to the characters. Above: Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams) escorts Princess Lea (Carrie Fisher) and Chewbacca under armed guard.

dition, RAIDERS is a big action piece with strong characters in it. So I think he felt I would be very comfortable with the action aspects of EMPIRE, and also be able to deliver some characterization.

Between August and September of 1978, Kasdan would meet with Lucas and director Irvin Kershner to go over Lucas's draft and talk about what they all wanted the movie to be. Then, Kasdan would go off to write a fifth of the film, get back together with Lucas and Kershner, and talk about what had been written. A draft was finally reached that represented the movie as finally shot, although a few more drafts were done to iron out detail changes.

"I visited the set in England, but only briefly," said Kasdan. "I had done almost all of my work by Christmas of '78. That's when they took off for England. We continued to correspond with drafts through early '79. The changes that happened after that were during shooting—most of them are in the line of dialogue changes, which often happens on the set. I

feel those are of varying degrees of success, but every screenwriter is dissatisfied with what happens by the time the words get to the actors' mouths. The only other area of change (during production) was a certain amount of condensation of sections of the movie that were dictated by logistics or mechanical problems."

As for describing the massive and all-important visual aspects of the STAR WARS mythos, Kasdan admitted, "It always starts with George: George talking to an artist about his conceptions, and encouraging the artist to come up with his own ideas. A great many of the things in that initial draft were things that were already in the painting stage with Ralph McQuarrie. I would sometimes see a painting of something in that draft before I had written about it at all. There were certain large events in the movie that were always part of the general structure, and how exactly they would look had much more to do with Ralph and the effects people than they did with me or Kershner."

Comparisons between STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES

BACK were, of course, inevitable. Some viewers still have a problem with EMPIRE's darker tone after having been thrilled with the first film's glowing naivete. But for Kasdan, the differences of the two films went much deeper, beginning with the very people living in the Lucas universe. "I think the major difference is that the characters are treated entirely different," said Kasdan. "It's not that you don't recognize them as being the same people. It's not that the sense of humor is different, because it's basically the same. What's different is the level of reality the people are treated on. You relate to them as people more, I hope. You feel they are in real jeopardy, and that they consider each other to be in real jeopardy, and they're worried about it. I'm not sure you ever really worried about that in the first STAR WARS.

"I like to think of EMPIRE as taking people we're familiar with over a kind of emotional horizon to a new territory," the writer continued. "It's as though you're on a journey with these characters and, as on all journeys where you travel with the same people for a while, you get to know them better, see more sides to them. The potential for character development was there in STAR WARS—there just wasn't time to develop it."

The preceding interview was conducted in 1980 prior to the release of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. Kasdan was in preparation for BODY HEAT, and Lucas was about to embark on REVENGE OF THE JEDI (softened later to RETURN, possibly because Lucas felt revenge was too base an instinct for the lofty Jedi Knights). With the continuation of Lucas's saga finally underway, Kasdan's final words from 1980 still ring true, if not just a touch ironic: "I don't know if he'll succeed in making all nine of these, but George and my working relationship is so positive, so productive, and so pleasant, I think it would be foolish to guess what our future involvement might be."

Fred Szeblin and Jordan R. Fox



Had George Lucas announced he was using CGI to remove the awful Ewoks from RETURN OF THE JEDI, he might have met less resistance from fans.

and significant. You will get more information that's ultimately connecting to the other stories. STAR WARS connects better now with EMPIRE and JEDI because of links that they've now put in and amplified. There are other things too, but I'll let them be a surprise to the audience. But there are little threads that I would think most of the fans will find exciting because it reveals things that makes them more connected. The trilogy was always looked upon as an epic story, and like any epic story there are little stories and characters running throughout them. I think it's more successful in that regard now."

According to Burt, the new footage also serves the purpose of connecting the present STAR WARS films to the planned prequel trilogy. "Adding new scenes gives a fresh view of the whole story, which does set one up nicely for the next trilogy," Burt said. "In a sense, [we are] updating the old, adding new details and story elements that will connect to the other stories better."

George Lucas has announced that he will direct Chapter One of the upcoming prequel trilogy, and Burt acknowledges the news. "We wondered up to this point, because he's been doing all the pre-production and supervision, all the decision making and creative process. By now, I think

continued on page 27

STAR WARS

SCI-FI ALLEGORY

Mysticism upstages technology.

STAR WARS is unique in the history of the *cinefantastique*. The saga has a powerful mystical appeal; its characters are less intellectual, more emotional and heroic than those of most science fiction, and their strength lies not in the futuristic use of technology, but in the wisdom of the spirit. Fans are typically more intrigued by the mysteries of the Force than by blueprints of the Death Star, and the antecedents of their heroes are not Buck Rogers-style adventurers, but the Jedi, who bear a closer resemblance to knight crusaders of Christian legend.

The structure of the STAR WARS trilogy also parallels older literary forms. Like Arthurian legends, and like other 20th-century works which borrow their structures from Christian allegory (e.g., the writings of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien), the films recount the experiences of a central character, in this case Luke Skywalker, in the course of his journey toward wisdom and the perfection of his faith. Like all allegorical heroes, he finds his quest fraught with dangers which cannot be overcome by physical force alone, and he encounters fantastic situations and characters representing real-life spiritual dilemmas and perils.

The first film is essentially a drama of conversion: Luke meets Ben Kanobie, who opens the younger man's mind to possibilities beyond the world of farm and family. Luke's response is typical of a boy his age; he is fired with enthusiasm for adventure, not to mention the possibility of rescuing the lovely Princess Leia, but comprehends little of Ben's explanation

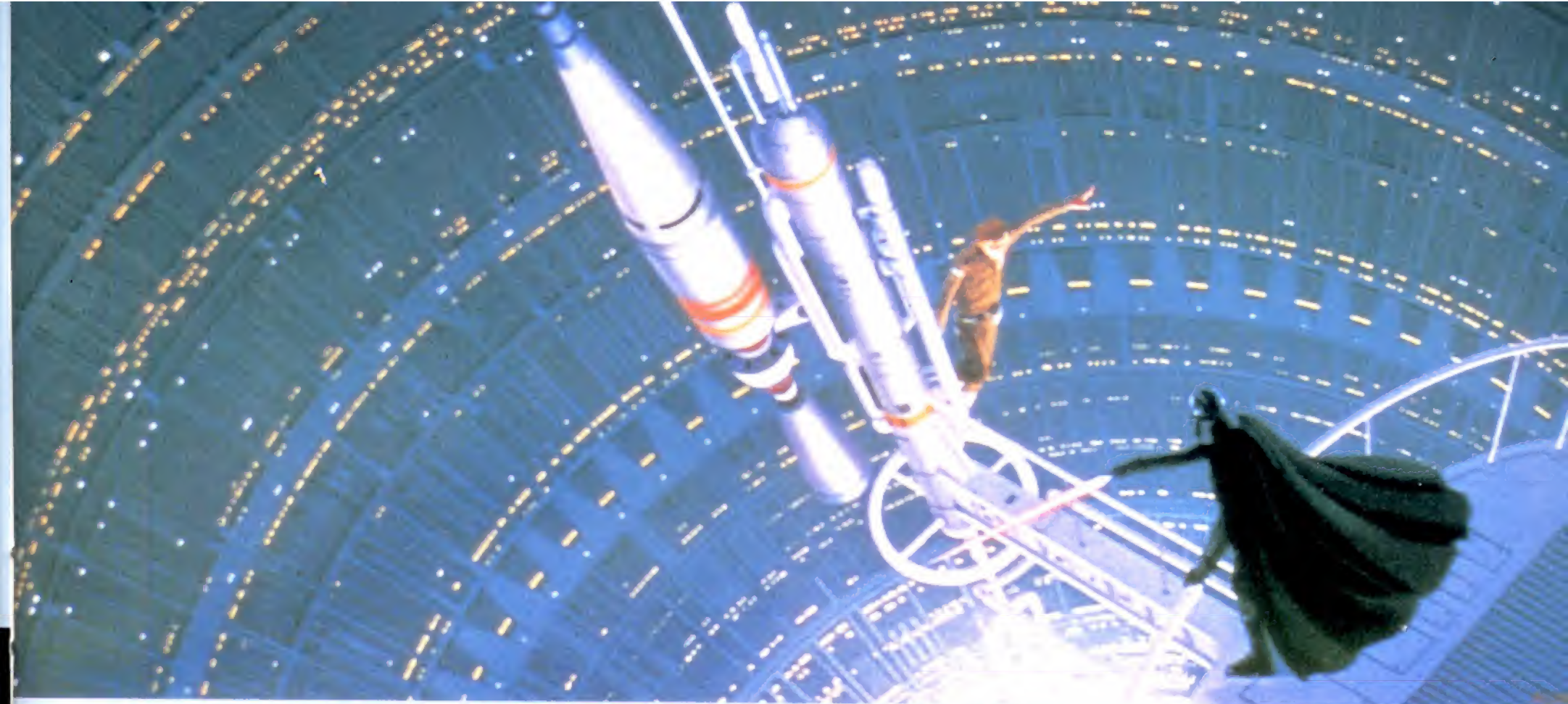


RETURN OF THE JEDI's finale shows the rewards of salvation: Ben, Yoda, and Anakin Skywalker watch the victory celebration, having found eternal life within the force.

of the Jedi tradition. Luke's reaction to Imperial domination is vengeful, rather than humanitarian; Darth Vader has, after all, killed his father (a metaphorical truth which Luke takes at face value). As Anakin Skywalker's friend, Ben becomes an alternate father, forcing Luke to choose between his only surviving blood relatives, and the Jedi, his spiritual family. Luke, troubled by the enormity of this decision, returns home only to find his aunt and uncle killed by stormtroopers. This brutal episode serves the plot in two essential ways: it allows Luke to turn to Ben without appearing disloyal to his family, and, more importantly, it removes the necessity of choice. Luke's "decision" becomes an act of circumstance, rather than a personal commitment, and his motives are not to serve the rebellion but to avenge his loved ones. Thus, his "conversion" is flawed and incomplete. It is not until he witnesses Ben's martyrdom in combat with Darth Vader that he begins to com-

prehend the potential cost of his new calling and the spiritual significance of the Jedi "vocation."

Luke is subsequently drawn into the ranks of rebel society—which, unlike the faceless, undifferentiated automatons of the Empire, remain human and individualistic. Their actions are not the result of blind obedience but of individual conscience, suggesting an informed morality behind their ideology. In the ultimate battle with Imperial forces, Han Solo's extraordinary act of conscience, his return, at risk, to aid the rebels, is also evidence of mature commitment. Although his faith is initially of a lesser order than that of his companions, Luke, as a Jedi, must somehow achieve a level of self-knowledge and spiritual purity exceeding the norm. It is only when he surrenders his own will to Ben's instructions that he is able to realize his true potential as an instrument of the Force. In doing so, he also implicitly rejects the dependence on technology associated with the Empire.



The "temptation" scene from **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**: Darth Vader urges his son, Luke Skywalker, to surrender to the Dark Side of the Force.

It is a wise choice. Significantly, the technology of the Death Star is inherently flawed, vulnerable to the attack of a lone spiritual warrior. Guided by the Force, Luke is able to set off a chain reaction which causes the evil device to self-destruct. The dark side of the Force, like the forces of evil in the Christian cosmology, are essentially corruptions of a greater power and, therefore, lack the true unity which will allow them to withstand the powers of righteousness. Their strength lies in physical domination and worldly temptation; by withstanding these forces, Luke passes the first major test of his faith.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK follows Luke as he finds his newfound faith tested in the world. The destruction of the Death Star has offered only temporary respite; Darth Vader and his Emperor continue to enslave the galaxy, and the rebels cannot match the Empire's military might. Only the spiritual guidance of a true Jedi can offer hope of victory.

The fate of the many, therefore, rests on the faith of Luke, who must fly in the face of logic to believe in the scientifically "impossible" Force. This internal spiritual battle appears hopeless, as he fails to recognize the power within his master, the diminutive Yoda, and within himself. Even once he accepts the existence of the Force's power, he proves incapable of understanding its true nature. In a mystical, visionary confrontation, he vanquishes his greatest enemy, Darth Vader, only to discover his own face behind the dark mask. The revelation fills him with terror but not comprehension, and he

proceeds unprepared, without the critical awareness that his own potential for evil must first be confronted if he is to become a true Jedi. As his comrades are taken prisoner, he must face Vader and the Imperial temptation to power alone. Finally, the disclosure of his true parentage allows him to comprehend the truth, and he chooses to fall to almost certain death rather than succumb to Vader. The decision avoided in the first film, the son's turning against his father in order to follow the path of righteousness, is now necessary. The young Jedi is saved by his "other family," but only as he proves himself willing to be a martyr to the greater cause. Using his father Anakin's light sabre, the weapon of the faithful, he sacrifices his hand to escape corruption. The hand is replaced by a black, mechanical prosthesis reminiscent of Darth Vader, an eternal reminder of his "sins of the father" and the

need for continued resistance to the dark side of the Force.

RETURN OF THE JEDI finds Luke more confident in the power of the Force and able to channel it to rescue his friends. He is now able to pass unaffected by the simple temptations of the flesh in Jabba's lair (unlike his younger self, who was captivated by the worldly corruption of his home planet's space port). He is still susceptible, however, to the spiritual temptation of pride. His awareness of the power he yields threatens to overcome his humility, and his rescue attempt almost oversteps the bounds of his abilities.

In his climactic confrontation with Vader and the Emperor, Luke must face his ultimate spiritual peril when he is tempted to play the role of avenging savior. At first, he simply defends himself, refusing to surrender to anger, but at the last moment he lays down his weapon and, like Ben, chooses martyrdom.

Moved by this act of faith on his son's part, and reminded of his former self, Vader does the same, and is able to die as a true Jedi, stripped of the Imperial mask and proving the eternal existence of the good side of the Force. The final message is clear: salvation is always available to those who place the Force before personal desire. The final scene shows the rewards of salvation: Ben, Yoda, and Anakin watch the rebel's victory celebration with peaceful benevolence, having found eternal life within the Force.

Throughout the films, Luke's spiritual progress is represented most clearly in the three climactic battles in which he must choose between the worldly power of technology and the humbling higher power of the Force. Each time his technology is symbolically decreased—from rebel fighter craft (conventional technology) to light sabre (the weapon of the spiritual warrior) to no weapon at all (complete dependence on faith alone). In the process, he changes from a conventional soldier to a warrior knight and, finally, to a kind of exemplary saint.

This powerful spiritual subtext best explains the enduring appeal of **STAR WARS**. Though its message is not explicitly Christian, it shares the basic tenets of that religion, while allowing for broader theological interpretations, making the films accessible across cultures and times. Such spiritual issues will remain forever universal, guarantying the survival of George Lucas's mythology well into the future, where it will no doubt take its place beside the spiritual allegories of past traditions. **Patricia Moir**

At the conclusion of **RETURN OF THE JEDI**, Luke not only defeats the evil Emperor but also manages to bring about the redemption of his father.



STAR WARS

GARY KURTZ

Producing big-budget special effects epics.

By Lawrence French & Paul Mandell

Now that George Lucas is preparing the first three episodes in his STAR WARS saga, it is interesting to note that the concept for nine different movies came about because of the overabundance of ideas contained in the original STAR WARS screenplay. Gary Kurtz, who produced both STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, recalls the genesis of that seminal screenplay: "The first scripts for STAR WARS were more or less covering the entire saga," said Kurtz. "They were long, involved, and elaborate treatments that ultimately wound up becoming all nine stories. The process of writing that George went through with STAR

WARS was to focus the original material down into a workable, two-hour piece. But it was out of those initial ideas that the whole saga evolved."

Since Lucas decided to begin the series with the middle trilogy, it was only on subsequent reissues that STAR WARS acquired the subtitle: "Episode Four, A NEW HOPE." "We got cold feet at the last minute and took that title out," explained Kurtz. "20th Century-Fox was worried, and to be perfectly honest, so were we. Most people wouldn't have understood what that meant. They would have been asking themselves, 'What happened to the first three episodes?' Whether George ever makes all nine movies depends on a lot of different things—everyone's feeling about it and the eco-

A scene from STAR WARS, with a motionless "dewback" in the background. The creature will be mobilized by computer effects for the special edition.



The attack on the Death Star reveals some barely discernable matte lines.

nomics of the business—although there's story material for the other two trilogies."

With George Lucas now digitally re-doing the effects shots in the first three STAR WARS movies, Kurtz noted that Lucas was often unhappy with the finished shots while the movies were being made, but felt it was the best that could be achieved within the constraints of the time and budget at their disposal. "Some of the shots were a little shaky or on the edge," admits Kurtz. "Sometimes, it's in the context of the other shots that are around them. We would always assign a value to the shot, when it got to the point where it was almost finished. We'd say, 'This shot is excellent, probably no more work needs to be done on it.' Or, 'This is a very shaky shot, and we definitely have to do something about it, but let's cut it in anyway and see how it's working.' We were always evaluating the shots, and later on, some of the shots that didn't seem to need any more work dropped back into the 'could be better' category. Conversely, some of the 'could be better' shots moved up to the finished category, because we'd find out there wasn't any way to do them any better!"

Kurtz feels that working on an expensive effects picture, tends to make him more conscious of allocating his resources carefully. "If you've got

something that's working, you don't need to spend any more time or energy on it," he explained. "You need to concentrate on things that aren't working. That's the decision you're making all the time. We don't always make that judgment correctly. Sometimes, you have to drop a few shots because they'll never work out. Several times we decided to stop work on a particular shot or scene. Had we spent any more time on it, we'd be taking away from something else. I think you have to approach it as though you were making a low-budget film. You do the best you can with your time and resources. Of course, you can get carried away; it happens to everybody. It's happened to me; it's happened to Francis Coppola; it's happened to Kubrick. You get so caught up in perfection, it siphons away energy and money from something else you should be spending it on. For instance, in 2001, Stanley Kubrick had a lot of problems that he could have solved if he had the equipment we used later on STAR WARS. Kubrick tried to do some shots of the spaceship passing by the camera and panning with it, but he couldn't do it, because he had no repeatable system, no way of matching the elements with a computer controlled camera. The equipment that John Dykstra put together for STAR WARS was just adapting available technology to new



Expect new effects for the re-release.

use; we didn't invent anything. All the motion-control camera does is to store the memory of whatever movement has happened, and then it duplicates it for you. The more intricate stepping motors you use, the more minute the detail you can record."

Among the many innovations STAR WARS helped to introduce to the film industry was the kind of very sophisticated sound editing and recording, that 20 years later, is now quite commonplace. "Sound was very crucial to the performance of STAR WARS," noted Kurtz. "The fact that a picture is done in stereo doesn't mean anything. In fact, stereo can point out the deficiencies in the soundtrack. It's the sound mix that is crucial. You really have to spend the time to do it right and to have the right sound effects to begin with. For STAR WARS, I virtually hired our sound designer, Ben Burtt, right out of film school. I had kept my contacts up with all the schools, just to find outstanding people. Ben was one of them. We were looking for someone to create some experimental sounds, to play with the voices and to create the animal voice of the Wookie. Ben seemed like the ideal person, because he had the right attitude, and had made his own special effects films. I worked as sound effects editor for quite a while, so I knew what it was like to get a picture, and then

have three weeks to put all the sound effects together. You can't record anything. You have to take it all out of stock libraries or whatever you can get your hands on. That's generally why the sound in most pictures was so inadequate. There's no time to record new things. I sent a three man sound team out to an aircraft carrier for four days, to record anything they could get a hold of: Planes taking off and landing, winches going up and down. Even without a specific purpose in mind, it can all be added to our sound library and used later on, by mixing things together, slowing them down or speeding them up. That was an invaluable asset when we did the sound mix on STAR WARS."

In 1977, after STAR WARS had become the highest grossing film of all time, Lucas and Kurtz were quick to engage a writer for the second episode in their first trilogy of space epics. In early 1978 they picked science-fiction novelist Leigh Brackett, who had co-written notable films directed by Howard Hawks, including THE BIG SLEEP. "We wanted someone with a background in science-fiction," said Kurtz, "who also understood screenwriting; we didn't just want a novelist. Leigh had done THE LONG GOODBYE for Robert Altman, and he mentioned her to us. Then, after we talked to Leigh, she really seemed like the ideal person. She had the right sensibility about space as an adventure genre, and she loved the idea of the STAR WARS characters. George gave her a rough overview of the

Producer Gary Kurtz with writer-director George Lucas on STAR WARS.



The carbon freezing chamber from EMPIRE encases Han Solo (Harrison Ford) while Lando watches, helpless.

story, and she was very easy to work with. We were scheduling a meeting with her to go over the script for a polish, when she died quite suddenly [in March of '78]. She was only in the hospital for four days. She had just barely finished her first draft, up to the last two pages. The pages weren't even typed, but they were done. Larry Kasdan, who was working on RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK for George at the same time, came in and did the polishing work on the script. He did a very good job on the final draft. It remained very close to the original script, in terms of the action. It was just the tone or emphasis of a particular scene that might have been altered slightly."

Unlike STAR WARS, there were no sequences written for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK that got left on the cutting room floor. "All we did was edit it down," said Kurtz. "The



script was quite a bit tighter than STAR WARS, and the structure of the story was pre-set, especially in the middle section, where things are bouncing back and forth quite a bit. We used almost everything, and no whole scene was removed."

To enhance the rapid transitions between the different stories being told during the film's middle section, EMPIRE borrowed the arty wipe techniques of the old movie serials. "That was definitely intentional," acknowledged Kurtz. "We didn't want to waste time explaining things. You just come into the middle of whatever is going on, without any exposition. The transitional devices came from a lot of the old Republic serials: DON WINSLOW OF THE NAVY, CAPTAIN MARVEL and DICK TRACY all had a lot of wonderful wipe techniques, that were actually much more sophisticated than the ones used in FLASH GORDON."

Kurtz actually came up with the title for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, while promoting the European release of STAR WARS. "I was in Paris, doing interviews," he recalled. "A reporter asked about doing a second picture, because STAR WARS was doing very well. I said, 'Well it will be a serial-

continued on page 60

STAR WARS

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Ralph McQuarrie on visualizing the Force.

If any one vision was second to the overall look, feel, and creation of George Lucas' STAR WARS universe, it would be that of conceptual artist Ralph McQuarrie. His design work for Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins' unrealized 1974 SF project CLEARWATER led the filmmakers to suggest him to George Lucas. Throughout late 1975, McQuarrie created 24 production paintings that helped the writer-director envision his galaxy of long ago and far, far away, and in doing so helped change the look of motion pictures forever. After contributing designs to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, McQuarrie began his extensive work on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, contributing not only production designs, but also creating matte paintings under the aegis of Harrison Ellenshaw.

As on STAR WARS, McQuarrie worked closely with Lucas. However, there were so many people involved with the film who had additional input that much of McQuarrie's work was changed in some way by the time the concept made it to the screen, although there were one or two exceptions. "One thing that came out pretty much the way I designed it except for a few unfortunate things that were a little too big in scope for the stages—there were so many sets to build that we really had to be economical, despite the great amount of money going into the film—was the sequence near the end of the film, the duel between Vader and Luke Skywalker," said McQuarrie. "They're in an area that we called the Carbon Freezing

Chamber. I had designed the chamber, but due to some suggestions Irvin Kershner made we ended up going with a different plan. It's kind of a void feeling now, with a circular platform.

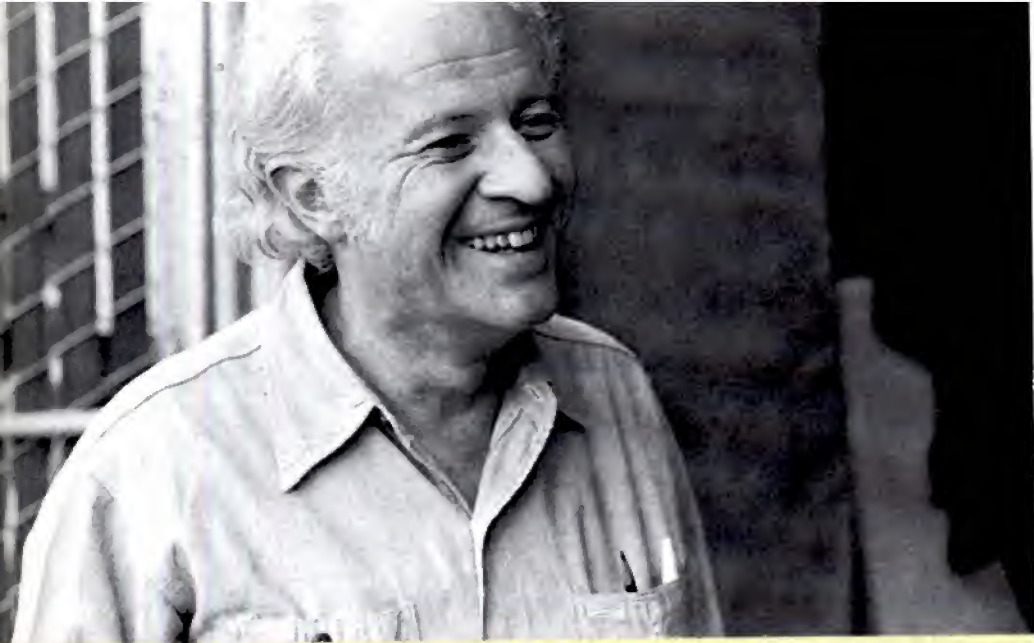
"When Skywalker falls off, and down through some pipes and stuff, into a whole other area, it's sort of like a vein inside of a gigantic shaft that goes down to the reactor of the Cloud City, which is supposed to be a couple miles down," the artist continued. "I worked a lot on that—the vein and the room inside there. I did the matte paintings of the vein exterior; Harrison [Ellenshaw] did some of the shaft looking down. All that sequence of the duel on the catwalk is my design."

Also included in McQuarrie's designs were Yoda's hut, made to look organic, almost as if an insect had made it, as well as his bog planet home and much of the Cloud City sequence—which, the artist added, also includes the contributions of many other artisans, such as the model builders at ILM, and Harrison Ellenshaw and his matte department. "Everyone's work blends in fine and gives it variety," he said.

McQuarrie's Cloud City designs were changed by production designer Reynolds, "but the general effect is still there," says McQuarrie. "Norman changed the interior a lot. Most of the spaces I had conceived of were much larger than available stage space would allow. They needed a stage they could really work on; they didn't want every shot to be a matte shot. There were only a couple of shots where they took the staged set and enlarged it with



Some of Ralph McQuarrie's paintings for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK illustrated the profound influence he had on the look of the STAR WARS films. From top to bottom: (1) Luke's X-wing fighter, crashed in the swamp planet Dagoba; (2) Lando Calrissian's city in the sky; (3 & 4) Luke in Yoda's hut, as envisioned by McQuarrie and as filmed.



Concept artist Ralph McQuarrie was pivotal in visualizing the elaborate and fanciful STAR WARS universe envisioned by creator George Lucas.

matte paintings. The stage was fairly large, but the space was still limited, so they'd take it apart occasionally and rework it to create other places in the city and make everything seem larger.

"The interiors are very effective," McQuarrie continued. The British carpenters and plasterworkers are really good. I'm afraid if I was designing the film, I wouldn't have had the nerve to go as far as Norman did, because he had more of an idea of what these guys could do. While I was working on it, George urged me to just forget about how hard things are to do on film, but make up *anything*. The stuff I did was used as reference material—it's there for the designer to look at."

One more task for McQuarrie to tackle was the painted glass art of the matte, used extensively in *EMPIRE* to add an even greater scope to what Lucas and director Kirshner were envisioning. McQuarrie found this specialized kind of painting more demanding due to having to change his ideas quite a bit to make them look realistic on the screen.

"We'd work on these things," McQuarrie said of his matte work with Ellenshaw and his crew. "I think they were about five or six feet wide. On some of them we didn't use the whole glass, so you can get in closer. You have to get back to the point where you can see the painting about the size it's going to be on the screen. Then, if you kind of squint down—you get the general effect. If it still looks like a painting, you've got to keep working on it, taking out those things that look too fussed over and rendered. In an illustration, you try to separate everything so that it 'reads' and makes sense. Reality is more...sloppy. Things blend together where they wouldn't in an illustration. Everything isn't so clear in the real world.

"You can get a matte done in various ways," McQuarrie continued. "If you've got some good ref-

erence to go by, and just copy it—every little spot equals what's in the photo—things are going to look photographic. If we're forced to make things up, we try to get a reference of something similar, even if only a similar light, such as taking a photo of morning light breaking over London so you can use the same values and colors. The buildings will be Cloud City instead of London. Then I'm further ahead than if I have to make everything up."

For the ice planet Hoth, the matte painters had 4 X 5 transparencies that were shot in Norway, the location for that planet, or books on Antarctica and any other snow and ice photography they could find to get color levels right. For Lando Calrissian's cloud city, they used a lot of after-sunset photography, including photos from *National Geographic*, and even went so far as to shoot slides of their models against an evening sky so that the light tones would be as close to reality as they could get. "The style of painting isn't all that important as long as you get the effect of reality," McQuarrie said. "Ellenshaw would drag my paintings in and use them as reference if he was doing a reverse shot on a shot I'd done."

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK used a new matte camera system with front projection that bounced the image off a beam splitter into the front-projection material. Very little light was needed to get a good image back to the camera lens. "We put the front-projection material right on the glass behind the painting, or sometimes right on the painting itself, in front," said McQuarrie. "You can look right through the viewfinder of the camera and see your painting combined with the image, which helps a lot in determining if you're going in the right direction. It's a nice tool. You can also pan and tilt quite a few degrees to give a feeling of movement."

Fred Szeblin and Jordan R. Fox

IMPROVING A CLASSIC

"You will get more information connecting STAR WARS to EMPIRE and JEDI," said Burt. "The trilogy was always an epic, and I think it's more successful in that regard now."

he's realized that, since he's been behaving like a director, he might as well be the director. He's very excited now about the new STAR WARS trilogy and seems to be full of life, humor, and excitement as he anticipates the new films being done."

Turning back the clock, Burt recalled, "When they offered me the job to develop sound for STAR WARS, I saw it as an opportunity to do something that hadn't been done. I was actually going to be hired to create sound right up front, before the film was shot—help shape and develop it all the way through. Of course, once I read the script and saw Ralph McQuarrie's artwork for the movie, I was overwhelmed.

"I grew up in an era when space adventure movies were always low budget," Burt continued. "There were old serials like *FLASH GORDON* and *BUCK ROGERS*, which I loved, but they were pretty hokey. Effects were primitive. I wondered, 'When will Hollywood ever put real money and a major studio into actually making *FLASH GORDON*?' Then I saw what was planned for STAR WARS—basically, a space adventure, almost like a western with heroes, villains, gunfights, chases and rescues—the stuff that serials were made of. But I saw that they were going to have this great look to it, with those visuals that George had Ralph McQuarrie come up with. It was taking elements of 2001, *METROPOLIS*, Art Deco, the serials and putting them all together in a *FLASH GORDON* package. I was thrilled! This was the kind of movie I've always wanted to see! I immediately had ideas for sound. In a way, I was already prepared for it. I'd made *FLASH GORDON* adventures as a kid! I considered it a real

blessing that this film was something I felt I really understood. I was inspired by it."

For Burt, the months leading up to STAR WARS' actual production is one of his earliest, fondest memories of the experience. "I have many pleasant memories about those movies. I was present running the video camera as we were casting the first film for several days. Lots of people were coming and going, trying out for Luke, Han or Leia. I was there when Mark Hamill tested for his first scene, and I think it was evident to me and others around that he was very good and sort of won the part on the spot. Harrison Ford at the time was a carpenter and came in during his lunch hour. He had his tool belt on and tested for Han Solo," grinned Burt. "When I look back on that now, I see how innocent we were and how we were just going about our jobs. I was fresh out of film school, and people like Harrison Ford hadn't begun their careers yet."

Burt also chuckled when recollecting the names of would-be Luke and Han Solo actors who didn't get the roles. "I recall Kurt Russell trying out for Han Solo. That was the time he was trying to break out of his Disney years, like *THE COMPUTER THAT WORE TENNIS SHOES*. I remember Robby Benson and Frederic Forrest trying out, probably as Han."

To portray the Princess Leia, *BEVERLY HILLS COP* and *MIDNIGHT CALLER* actress Lisa Eilbacher was among many considered for the role. "There was a woman named Terri Nunn. I don't know what became of her, but I thought she was very good and I thought she had the part!"

As far as the actual job was concerned, Burt was handed a Nagra tape recorder by producer Gary Kurtz and told to go in-

STAR WARS

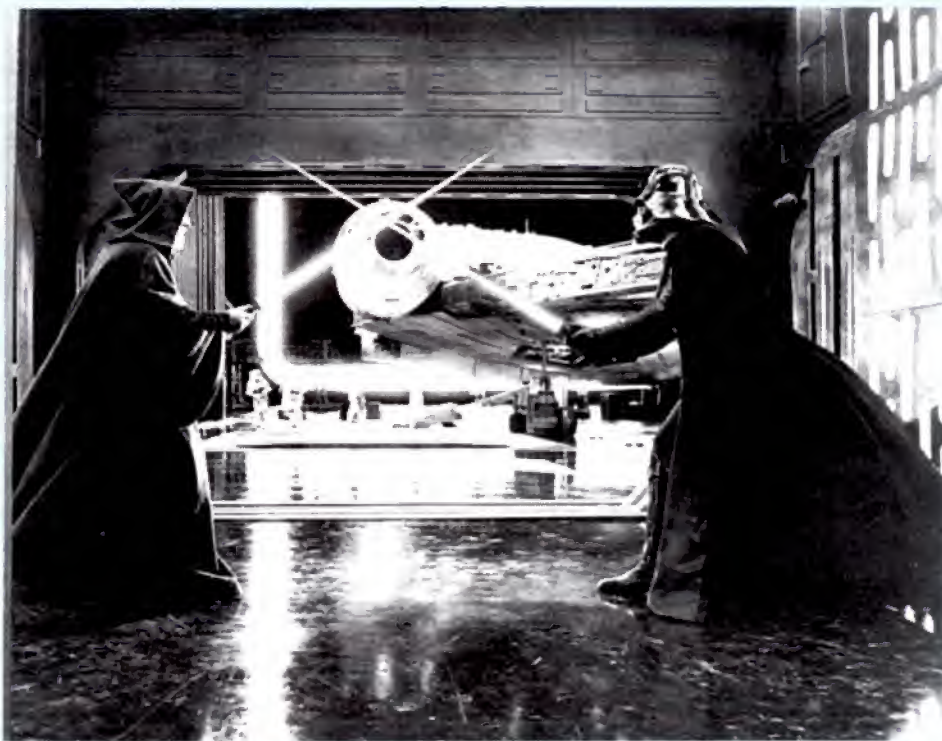
THE CLONE WARS

Lucas directs the first episode of the prequel trilogy.

After a break of sixteen years, audiences will finally get to see George Lucas's long promised "first" episode in the STAR WARS saga, now scheduled for release in 1999. At the helm will be Lucas himself, marking his first directorial effort since the original STAR WARS in 1977. Pre-production on the movie has begun in London, and although the film is officially untitled, the leading contenders (from a long list of possibilities), include CHILDREN OF THE FORCE, THE CLONE WARS, and BALANCE OF THE FORCE.

As usual, the highly secretive Lucas has released only the barest scraps of information concerning his plans for the prequel trilogy, although the screenplay is already finished. Among the events likely to be dealt with in the first three episodes: The early relationship between Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi, both slated to be played by actors in their early teens; the hunting down and destruction of the Jedi Knights (the guardians of the old Republic), by the minions of the maleficent Emperor; and the Emperor's ascension to power, as the remnants of the old Republic are swept away. According to early drafts of Lucas's original STAR WARS script, General Kenobi leads the forces of the old Republic at the battle of Condawn, under the command of Princess Leia's adoptive father, Bail Organa. It is at this momentous battle that Luke's father, Anakin Skywalker, succumbs to the dark side of the force and becomes Darth Vader. Ben Kenobi and Vader then face each other, resulting in a confrontation that ends with Vader being badly disfigured after falling into a volcanic pit.

In recent comments, Lucas has indicated that the new trilogy will center on Anakin Skywalker's fall from grace, and the subsequent loss of freedom that occurs throughout the galaxy. The overall tone is one of darkness and de-



Kenobi (Alec Guinness) and Vader (David Prowse) battle in STAR WARS. The prequels, with younger actors, will explain how the pair became enemies.

spair, as good and virtue are vanquished by the powers of darkness.

Lucasfilm has officially announced that production on the new STAR WARS prequel will begin in the fall of 1997 at Leavesden Studios, a short distance from the EMI Elstree studios, where the original STAR WARS was shot. Leavesden is a former Rolls-Royce factory that was converted into a studio complex for the making of the James Bond film GOLDENEYE. It has since become a permanent filmmaking facility, with over half a million square feet of studio space and a backlot of 100 acres. Lucas plans to equip the studio with all the advanced technology needed to make his new movie, including a direct digital link to ILM in Northern California that will allow for the instantaneous transmission of shots originating in England. In addition, many of the sets will be created or enhanced digitally, as was the case with the Lucasfilm production, RADIOLAND MURDERS, which proved to be both a commercial and critical fiasco. However, that film pioneered the technique of creating spectacular sets digitally,

on a modest budget of only \$10 million dollars.

Producing the new STAR WARS film is Rick McCallum, who has overseen the Lucasfilm TV show, YOUNG INDIANA JONES. McCallum told the *Star Wars Insider* (the Lucasfilm fan magazine), that casting has already begun for the roles of Anakin Skywalker and a young Queen character (possibly Luke and Leia's real mother).

Lucas has indicated he plans to cast unknowns in the leading roles, and McCallum reported that casting director Robin Gurland has already seen over 1,500 young actors. Despite that, rumors abound concerning possible well-known names who are under possible consideration. For Anakin, the list includes Eric Lloyd (Tim Allen's son in THE SANTA CLAUSE), Nick Stahl (THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE), and Macaulay Culkin (highly doubtful). For the Queen, rumors center on Natalie Portman, Winona Ryder, and fashion model Nina Brosh.

Rick McCallum also reports that production designer Gavin Bocquet has been traveling to countries around the world in

search of exotic locations to portray different planets, including Morocco, Portugal, Australia and Tunisia. Like the previous STAR WARS episodes, the film will feature three major action sequences, all heavy with effects. Lucas has reportedly shown portions of the script to the top designers and effects personnel at ILM, thus enabling them to begin their all important work on the project. However, in an attempt to stifle leaks, one source at ILM reports that Lucas has devised a bonus incentive plan to keep his employees from talking about the film. Under this plan, the fewer leaks that are reported, the higher their bonuses.

Finally, in an effort to deflect interest away from the production, Lucas has apparently devised a fictional title for the film, RED TAILS, a movie supposedly about the exploits of the first Afro-American fighter pilots during World War II. Lucas came up with a similar plan during the filming of RETURN OF THE JEDI, when he gave that production the code-name of BLUE HARVEST.

Twentieth Century-Fox no longer has first rights to distribute the next films of the trilogy, which means a furious bidding war among the major studios is sure to break out once Lucas seeks distribution. Steven Spielberg and his partners in Dreamworks are rumored to have an inside track in obtaining the coveted franchise for their fledgling studio. In return, Spielberg might direct the second or third episode of the trilogy, instead of a fourth installment of the overworked adventures of INDIANA JONES.

In 1994, when Lucas first indicated he was planning to make the new trilogy, he talked about shooting the films back to back, an idea he has now abandoned. Lucas obviously realized the plan was highly unfeasible to begin with, since the requirements of making three films at one time would triple his budget and cause a myriad of production problems. **Lawrence French**



STAR WARS's effects by John Dykstra won a 1978 Academy Award, but now they're not good enough for Lucas.

to the world and create a library of "organic" sounds to become the various creatures and aliens appearing in the film. Burt had a luxurious year to collect his material while everyone else on the project went to England. Imagination played a large role in Burt's hunt for unusual sounds. The job led him to collecting sounds from such wildly diverse locations as zoos, aircraft carriers, aquariums, theaters, factories and airports.

"I can remember creating the sounds for the laser guns, which was this wire *twang*," said Burt. "That sound has become the definitive sound for all lasers. I still hear today, in movies, something that comes up that sounds like that or similar to it. It's satisfying to know you have ideas or inspiration in a given moment, that takes root and you see the effect. My kids will make those sound effects now when they shoot at each other. Literally, this is what a laser gun sounds like, right? It's become part of video games and music.

"You see the little ripples of impact, and that's kind of fun. The bottom line for me as a filmmaker is you like to share what's in your imagination with your audience. It's very satisfying to see the little ideas you have. Sometimes you fail; sometimes you get something right. It's fun to see them ripple through and get feedback."

After working on the first STAR WARS trilogy, Burt embarked on many different projects including writing episodes of DROIDS, the animated series which can be seen on the Sci-Fi

STAR WARS

ACTION FIGURE

Lucasfilm kept the dormant franchise alive with clever merchandising.

By Dan Cziraky

Last year, when INDEPENDENCE DAY was still a month away from release in the U.S. and all photos of the film's alien invaders were being held back by 20th Century-Fox, the action-figures of those aliens were already in toy stores. Yet when STAR WARS hit theaters in 1977, there wasn't a plastic R2-D2 or a die-cast X-Wing Fighter to be had. At that time, Hasbro's "G.I. Joe" 12-inch military doll was the dominant boys' action toy, with Mego's 8-inch figures of comic book super-heroes and TV show characters running a close second. It just goes to show you what a difference two decades can make.

When STAR WARS took audiences by storm, it took Kenner Toys completely by surprise. The company had the toy license but wouldn't have any product ready until early 1978. In order to meet the overwhelming demand for Christmas '77, Kenner innovated the "Early Bird Special"—essentially, a cardboard envelope containing a mail-in certificate for the first four of twelve STAR WARS action figures: Luke, Leia, Chewbacca, and R2-D2. The envelope folded out into a display stand for the figures, which were shipped in an unmarked white box. These figures are notable today for Luke's telescoping lightsaber, a feature that was deleted from the toys by the time they hit stores in March '78.



Although there has not been a new STAR WARS film in 14 years, Lucasfilm has kept the franchise alive with merchandising, such as the action figure toys.

The small, roughly 3-3/4-inch figures were an instant success. Jointed at the necks, shoulders, and hips, the figures were small enough to make reproducing the spaceships, such as the X-Wings and T.I.E. fighters, feasible. Playsets included an elaborate Death Star section (including the trash compactor) and the Millennium Falcon, with lighted engines, cockpit area, and the circular chess table. More figures were made, including the popular "Cantina Creatures," with names like Hammerhead and Snaggletooth. Kenner even started a line of large-scale figures, with Chewbacca towering over poor old, out-dated G.I. Joe. The toys were still selling briskly when THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK opened in

1980, and Kenner even released figures of Boba Fett (both large and small scales) prior to the film's release. (It wasn't uncommon for kids to lop off the right hands of Luke figures or stick their Han figures in the freezer after seeing the movie.)

By the time RETURN OF THE JEDI opened in 1983, Kenner had virtually redefined the action figure market with their STAR WARS line. Almost all action-figures were now small-scale, and even Hasbro abandoned their 12-inch G.I. Joes and created a new line of 3-3/4-inch scale figures and vehicles. Mego tried their hands at the smaller figures, as did Remco, but both companies eventually folded. Soon, 12-inch figures were the sole territory of

Barbie and other fashion dolls. (Even Kenner abandoned their large STAR WARS line, with the robot bounty hunter IG-88 from EMPIRE being the last in that line.) However, even the STAR WARS line had to reach a saturation point eventually. When two Saturday morning animated series were spun-off from the films following the release of JEDI, neither show caught on with kids. Although Kenner released figure lines for both DROIDS (featuring the adventures of R2-D2 and C-3PO prior to STAR WARS) and EWOK ADVENTURES (which concentrated on the pint-sized furballs from JEDI), even their core STAR WARS toys were starting to lag in sales, and Kenner canceled all the toys in 1985.

In the late 1980s, the phenomenon of action-figure collecting by adults started to increase. Kenner had incredible success with Batman toys, and Playmates Toys had a best-selling line from STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. This combination of figures based on popular movies and TV series appealing to both kids and adult collectors (willing to pay big money for rare figures), along with the growing popularity of the STAR WARS trilogy on home video, paved the way for new STAR WARS toys. Just Toys acquired the license for rubber, bendable figures (or "Bendies") in 1993, which sold well, but fans wanted the articulated figures. Collectors were paying hundreds of dollars at toy shows and sci-fi conventions for original Kenner figures, with the rarest figure, Yak Face from JEDI, having only been released in Canada and overseas.

In 1994, rumors started that the toy license for STAR WARS had been picked up by Playmates, which would release a line of figures in scale with their STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION line. As it turned out, Kenner won the license back, and had big plans. George Lucas had recently announced he was starting work on the long-awaited STAR WARS prequels, a new trilogy set twenty years in the past, chronicling the rise to power of the Emperor. Also, Lucas planned to re-re-



A Darth Vader vs. Prince Xizor two-pack—one of the ways Lucas has introduced new characters that fans will expect to see in the subsequent trilogy.

lease STAR WARS in 1997, with new footage and enhanced effects. Kenner intended to cash in on this STAR WARS resurgence. While fans were eager for any new product, figure collectors feared that a new line would force down the values of the original toys. Their fears seemed confirmed when it was learned that Kenner would re-use the original molds for some figures, as well as most of the vehicles.

Kenner's STAR WARS: THE POWER OF THE FORCE action-figures and vehicles debuted in 1995 to lots of praise from fans and collectors. Still in the 3 3/4-inch scale, the level of detailing was vastly improved. Most importantly, kids instantly responded to the new toys, and it was almost impossible to keep them in stores for more than a day or two! With a nod to the collectors, Kenner did short production runs of certain figures, most notably Princess Leia (female figures, though popular with collectors, traditionally don't sell well). They also released a boxed four-pack of figures from the original Kenner line, but these figures (Luke, Darth Vader, Han Solo, and a Stormtrooper) were made from copies of the original molds, so they were somewhat smaller and presented no threat to collectors. After the initial release of eight figures and three vehicles, Kenner added more in 1996, and started a parallel line of toys based on the multi-media story SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE. The line included new variations on the established figures, as well as such all-new characters as the evil

Prince Xizor and cavalier mercenary Dash Rendar.

Galoob, manufacturers of the tiny "Micro Machines" toys, had started making miniature STAR WARS vehicles in 1993, and have also expanded their line to include SHADOWS toys. Just Toys, still making their STAR WARS bendies, now has characters from all three films, but have not, so far, released any SHADOWS toys. AMT/Ertl has re-issued almost all of their original STAR WARS model kits, and are rumored to be considering SHADOWS kits, too. Kenner has even more figures and vehicles planned for 1997, just prior to the Presidents Day re-release of STAR WARS.

Besides their obvious appeal to children, who love to act out scenes from the films and create new situations for the characters, STAR WARS toys have endured and actually increased their popularity because of the devotion of the fans. From the casual fan, who just wants a Darth Vader action figure to stand guard over his PC at work, to the obsessive who must own every single piece of movie memorabilia in order for their lives to be complete, the fans have elevated these toys to a level far exceeding the average hunk of plastic left out on the front yard after the kids are called in for dinner. Books have been written cataloguing STAR WARS memorabilia, and the monthly publication Tomart's Action Figure Digest contains a regular "STAR WARS Update." To paraphrase the popular mantra of the trilogy, "May the toys be with you, always." □

Channel. (Notably, Burt wrote the rarely seen one-hour special THE GREAT HEAP.) He provided sound design for such Steven Spielberg films as E.T. (1982); the Indiana Jones trilogy, for which he garnered another Academy Award for sound work on INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE (1989); and ALWAYS (1989).

In 1990, Burt opted for a career change. "I decided to go freelance as a director," he recalled. His first effort was an IMAX film, called BLUE PLANET (1991). "Very generously, Graham Ferguson, the Canadian producer of the film, gave me an opportunity to direct sequences of the film, and that got me going," said Burt.

Later, Burt directed a second film in the large-screen IMAX format, DESTINY IN SPACE (1994), which led to last year's opus, SPECIAL EFFECTS: ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN. In it, among other films, Burt and his crew documented behind-the-scenes filming of the STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION. He also recreated, in full IMAX format, two memorable effects sequences from the film.

"On the heels of that, George Lucas started up the Young Indy series [in 1992]. I was asked if I wanted to edit on the series and if I wanted to do some [second-unit] directing, too," said Burt. This soon led to an opportunity for Burt to direct the third of four YOUNG INDIANA JONES telefilms for The Family Channel, ATTACK OF THE HAWKMEN in 1995.

With so many recent personal and professional challenges achieved, Burt says he's happier today. "I love sound, but to be honest, I got a little tired of [always] sound mixing in studios, in the dark and editing every day in a booth with loud noises. As much as I had glorious success in that area, I really needed to move on and pursue other interests I had.

"So much has happened over the 20 years. Careers have been made. Film genres have been established, the legacies of STAR WARS films and the related cultures that it's spawned. It's been fun being a part of it." □

STAR WARS

LASERBLAST

The only way to see the original versions again.

By Dennis Fischer

In the '70s, if a film was a blockbuster and you wanted to see it again, you did not wait for video; you went back to the theatre. STAR WARS reached the pinnacle of box office success by being just such a film, so when it was finally released on laserdisc, it was something of a surprise (with rumors that 20th Century Fox had ignored George Lucas' objections).

Aesthetically speaking, the film's first laser release (on CBS/FOX) was a disaster. Not only were the widescreen compositions horribly cropped; the film was time compressed into 118 minutes that could be squeezed onto a single disc, and the image was often fuzzy. The sequels were given equally shabby treatment when they appeared on disc.

Then, the first two films

were released in CAV, in identical jackets, but this time presented at their correct lengths. Strangely, RETURN OF THE JEDI was not released in CAV domestically, and the CLV version offered blurry colors and fuzzy-looking effects. 20th Century Fox Video pioneered the digital sound encoding system on discs, but has had a bad tendency of overpricing many of their discs and of releasing faded prints of older titles when laserphiles expect a disc release to be either a restored, newly struck, or best available print.

Then CBS/FOX released the trilogy yet again as "Deluxe Widescreen Editions," while in Japan the films were released both widescreen and CAV. (The Japanese had slightly better framing, though the transfers looked better on the American discs.) These initial letterboxed

A beautiful effects shot of the Millennium Falcon in STAR WARS. Although the theatrical re-release will tamper with the film, the original is still available on disc.



Jabba and the Hut and Princess Leia in RETURN OF THE JEDI. The silly character will be added to STAR WARS with CGI, so laserdiscs may be your only chance to see the films as they were originally released over a decade ago.

versions offered improved sound over the earlier releases, with better surround sound effects, but they still fall short of a theatrical presentation. Nevertheless, careful attention was paid to the soundtrack, especially bass sounds, which are incredible and well-defined. RETURN OF THE JEDI still suffered from graininess.

There were hopes that the missing Biggs and Jaba the Hut footage, cut from STAR WARS, would be restored in Fox's THE STAR WARS TRILOGY: THE DEFINITIVE EDITION, but instead fans had to settle for the best video transfers to disc yet, offered in both widescreen and CAV format. The original multi-track soundtracks were remixed for stereo with significant improvement, and the picture image is much sharper and clearer than on the previous releases, with both STAR WARS

and RETURN OF THE JEDI finally achieving optimal picture quality. The box set was hefty in a number of ways: price, weight (13 pounds), and discs (nine).

It also offered some interesting bonuses, including copies of the poorly selling *George Lucas: the Creative Impulse* by Charles Champlin, supplemental sections that detail an archive collection of memorabilia from the films, and examples of how the Imperial Walkers were animated. On the downside, the extensive trailer collection, which includes REVENGE OF THE JEDI teasers, is faded. The audio commentaries cover only a third of each film's length and do not conform to the chapter encoding on the disc. Also, some copies of EMPIRE accidentally omitted a few seconds of Carrie Fisher

continued on page 61

STAR WARS

SELLING THE FORCE

The artists who took us to a galaxy far

Twenty years ago, when executives at 20th Century Fox saw the rough cut of STAR WARS, it wasn't a reassuring experience. The film appeared to be a difficult sell, and few people thought it had the potential to gross much over \$30 million. The head of Fox's advertising department, David Weitzner, began working on the film in

February of 1977 and hired the successful advertising agency of Smolen, Smith and Connolly, which had previously created campaigns for such movies as CARRIE, ANNIE HALL, and THE OMEN. Donald Smolen began his task by examining the initial marketing research that had been conducted. "The reports from the early screenings were not very en-

couraging," said Smolen. "We were told not to spend too much money, because the research showed it was just another science-fiction movie. They certainly weren't very excited about it, with the exception of Ashley Boone, the vice president of distribution at Fox, who kept touting the film, saying, 'It's going to be big.' He had an early line on the movie that a lot of us didn't have."

When Fox screened the film for Smolen and his two partners, Murray Smith and John Connolly (now a screenwriter), they were not impressed. "We didn't think anything of the film," noted Smolen, "because none of the effects were finished. All of the space combat sequences were inserts of World War II airplanes. At that point, there was so much missing from the film it was not fair to judge it, although we did. However, my job was to make sure the film got sold. In that regard it didn't make any difference what the research showed or what anybody thought about the film. We were just trying to sell the film in the best way possible."

Smolen and his partners felt Tom Jung would be the ideal illustrator to develop initial poster concepts. Jung had worked as an art director on many of MGM's big roadshow films of the sixties, in conjunction with poster artist Howard Terpning. Among the posters Jung designed for MGM were DR. ZHIVAGO, RYAN'S DAUGHTER, and the famous 1967 re-issue for GONE WITH THE WIND.

For inspiration, Jung watched the rough cut of STAR WARS, read the shooting script, and looked at hundreds of photographs. "I'd pore over all the stills and start coming up with concepts," said Jung. "Every time I'm given an assignment, I plunge right into it and come up with a dozen or so drawings. I do them very thoughtfully, and then we'd go over them in meetings with Don Smolen and Ashley Boone. The concept presented to me in a couple of words was 'good and evil.' I hardly ever get much more direction than that. They hand me the material and tell me what not to do. Then, when I come back with the painting, they attack me."

Jung briefly considered using Frank Frazetta, with whom he had worked as an art director. "I would have loved to design the STAR WARS poster using Frank, because Frazetta is simply unmatched in this area, especially in the series he did on Conan," declared Jung. "He was very hot in those days, and he could do such wonderful things, although he sometimes seemed to repeat himself. Being an art director as well as an illustrator, I tend to think of what's best for the film."

Although Frazetta was never contacted, his style certainly influenced Jung's final painting. "Obviously, the painting is total fantasy," remarked Jung. "I wanted to be stylistic about it, so that's why the heroic figures of Luke and Leia, standing against the hovering face of Darth Vader don't look exactly like Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher. The actors were all un-

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...



TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX Presents
A LUCASFILM LTD. PRODUCTION

STAR WARS

Starring MARK HAMILL HARRISON FORD CARRIE FISHER
PETER CUSHING

and
ALEC GUINNESS

Written and Directed by GEORGE LUCAS Produced by GARY KURTZ Music by JOHN WILLIAMS

A NEW HOPE
STAR WARS

The Hildebrandt brothers' 1977 artwork for STAR WARS' foreign release—previously available in the U.S. only as a poster sold at stores—was used as a theatrical poster for the 15th anniversary, with the new title, A NEW HOPE.

RS

, far away.

knowns at the time, so it didn't seem terribly important to have an exact likeness of them."

Jung had the most trouble getting approval for the figure of Princess Leia, who is presented in the painting as a far sexier character than is ever seen in the movie. "We had a problem with Carrie Fisher," noted Jung, "because they wanted to make her more glamorous. I got my wife to pose for the drawing, and I changed the hairdo and shoved the paint around until I came up with the figure you see now. Carrie Fisher's mother, Debbie Reynolds, loved the poster. She called David Weitzner at Fox's advertising department and asked if she could have the painting, so he asked me to do a duplicate painting, which is now hanging in Carrie Fisher's house. The original painting is at Skywalker Ranch."

Standing behind Luke and Leia in Jung's painting are small drawings of the robots C-3PO and R2-D2 that were not part of his original work. Apparently, George Lucas himself insisted that the droids be included, which went against the recommendations of the early research reports. "The two robots were added to the painting without my knowledge," admitted Jung, "although I didn't have any problems with that." Ironically, when the robots were dropped into Jung's painting for the film's half-sheet poster (22x28), they appeared right above his signature.

One character Jung would have liked to include in his 22 x 28 painting was Grand Moff Tarkin, played by Peter Cushing. "I had done all sorts of concept drawings for Peter Cushing horror movies during the '60s," re-

called Jung. "On STAR WARS, I sketched him into some of my concepts, but they didn't use those. I remember in one of my drawings he was standing looking at a fleet of his Imperial fighters taking off, which was an invented scene. I think some of these English actors, like Alec Guinness and Peter Cushing were really the best."

Although Tom Jung's 22 x 28 poster art was used in the first full-page newspaper ads that appeared in New York and Los Angeles on Sunday May 15th, 1977, the following week

saw the debut of a newspaper ad featuring artwork done by Tim and Gregg Hildebrandt, based on Tom Jung's original one-sheet art. Strangely enough, this pre-release ad did not feature C-3PO and R2-D2, although they were quickly added to the subsequent ads.

The Hildebrandt's version of the artwork was created at the request of Lucas, who apparently wanted a more comic book oriented design that could be licensed for sale to the public. "George Lucas had the idea to use the Hildebrandts," recalled

THE STAR WARS SAGA CONTINUES



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK's first poster, by Roger Kastel, omitted the image of Billy Dee Williams, a mistake altered a few weeks after release.

Jung. "It was an afterthought on his part...he felt that type of illustration might be more suitable. Of course, they took my design, and Don Smolen tells me the two brothers, Tim and Gregg, were in his office in New York, each feverishly working from either end of the painting, until they met in the middle."

Smolen recalls being amazed that the Hildebrandts managed to finish their painting over a weekend. "They came in to our studio on a Friday," relat-

By Lawrence French

THE SAGA CONTINUES.



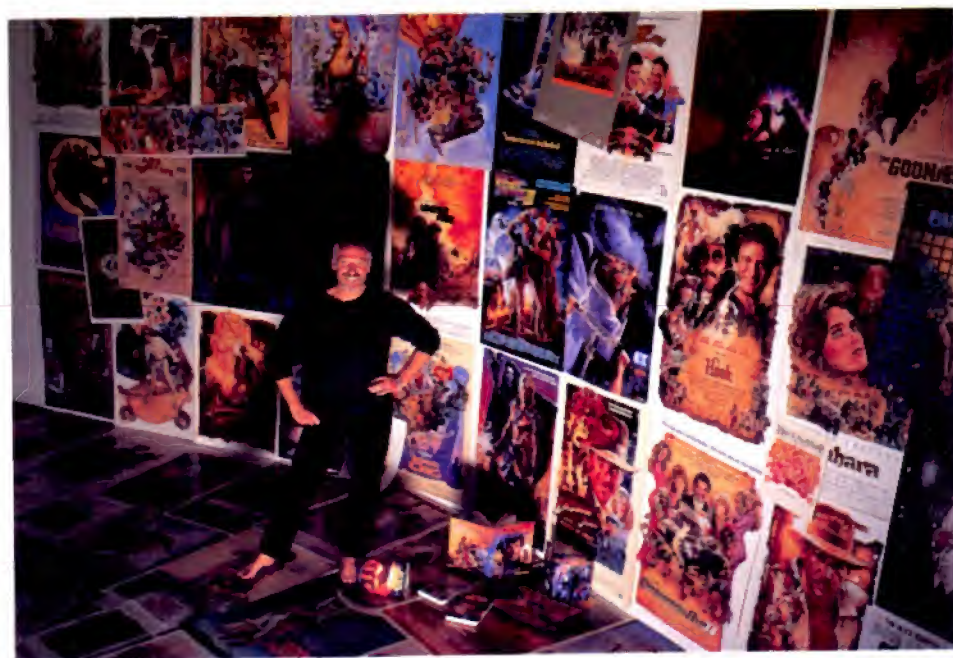
ed Smolen, "and the deadline was on Monday. They spent the entire weekend painting, and on Monday it was finished. I believe they copied it from Tom's painting. I'm not putting them down, because that's what was required. The paintings are identical in form, the only thing that's different is the technique. Afterwards, they had some problems with Fox. They filed a lawsuit, and a lot of nasty stuff happened when the film became such a hit."

Evidently, the Hildebrandts sued Fox for a share of royalties, after Lucasfilm came out with merchandising items featuring their artwork. "After the Hildebrandts got their regular fee, they went to court to get more money," said Jung. "That one incident started an uproar that George Lucas took all the way to the end. Since then, there's been a lot of clarification about who owns the copyright of the painting. During the time the lawsuit was in progress, Fox

asked me to sign an affidavit, stating that I designed the painting which was used by the Hildebrandts. There were so many egos involved, including my own. Normally I try to do my very best, and after that I don't care too much about it."

In America, the Hildebrandt design was never used for a theatrical poster, although it was used in several foreign countries. In a bizarre twist, several of the international posters actually composited the Jung artwork of Luke and Leia against the Hildebrandt background of Darth Vader and a fleet of X-wing fighters.

The famous STAR WARS logo, with lettering that seems to be cut out of a blue star field, and slants upwards in a 45-degree angle, was designed by Donald Smolen and Murray Smith, with input from Tom Jung. The logo became the centerpiece of both the 1979 and 1981 STAR WARS re-issue posters. It was enlarged, and a



The advanced one-sheet for REVENGE OF THE JEDI, by Drew Struzan, was replaced when the titled changed. Above: Struzan amidst his many works.

cropped version of Jung's artwork of Luke and Leia was placed in front of the logo. "That logo has been used forever," noted Smolen, "although they didn't use it for the latest re-issue of the films on video. We designed all the billing type, and in those days we didn't have the kind of billing blocks you have today, where there's 20 names. At every step of the design process, the studio approved everything, and there was very little problem with the assignment. It went through very easily."

Twenty years later, Jung's original painting is still used on numerous STAR WARS items, including the recent 4-CD box set of the complete John Williams scores, as well as calendars, poster reproductions, and trading cards. Surprisingly, Jung receives no royalties for

the ongoing use of his artwork, but he doesn't feel it's inappropriate. "It seems to me, it's the only intelligent thing to do," declared Jung, "because it's artwork that is so readily recognizable and it seems to be so apt. I think George liked the mood of my painting. He liked the idea of good and evil, rather than some of the more action-oriented scenes."

When STAR WARS was released in England toward the end of 1977, artist Tom Chantrell painted a majestic tableau for a new style C poster, which for the first time featured all of the film's nine major characters. Quite inexplicably, this marvelous poster was never used in American theaters. The impact of Chantrell's colorful artwork was lost when it was

Tom Jung's original half-sheet art shows his Frank Frazetta-style Luke and Leia; the latter appears more "glamorous" than in the actual film.



“We had a problem with Carrie Fisher,” said artist Tom Jung, “because they wanted to make her more glamorous. I got my wife to pose for the painting.”

used only in black-and-white print ads, heralding STAR WARS' ten Academy Award nominations. Tom Jung admired Chantrell's painting, calling it “a terrific job. It was used for the English poster, but the consensus was they wanted to use my painting, even in foreign countries.”

Jung was to be rewarded with jobs on the two subsequent episodes in the trilogy, but for the style D poster created for STAR WARS re-issue in the summer of '78, Fox and Lucas approached Charlie White III to design a completely new one-sheet. White asked a young artist friend, Drew Struzan, to help do the portraits, and the resulting collaboration proved to be a spectacular success. Struzan had toiled on many low-budget films at AIP, including FOOD OF THE GODS and TENTACLES, before gradually gaining a reputation for portraiture. “STAR WARS was really the big break for me,” exclaimed Struzan. “I had done years of work before, but nothing that stood out as dramatically. Charlie White had gotten the job to do the poster, but he was modest enough to call me and say, ‘Look, I’m not really a portrait artist. How would you like to share a piece of art? You do the portraits, and I’ll do the robots.’ I thought it would be a lot of fun working with the STAR WARS characters.”

Struzan and White divided the picture almost in half, with White doing the bottom and Struzan doing the top. “It turned out to be a very interesting piece,” noted Struzan. “There were two styles in one poster. I did Luke and Leia on the rope, as well as Han Solo and Obi Wan Kenobi. My half was done in two different techniques, with part of it in oils and part in acrylics. Charlie painted the robots on the landspeeder with an airbrush, as well as Darth Vader,

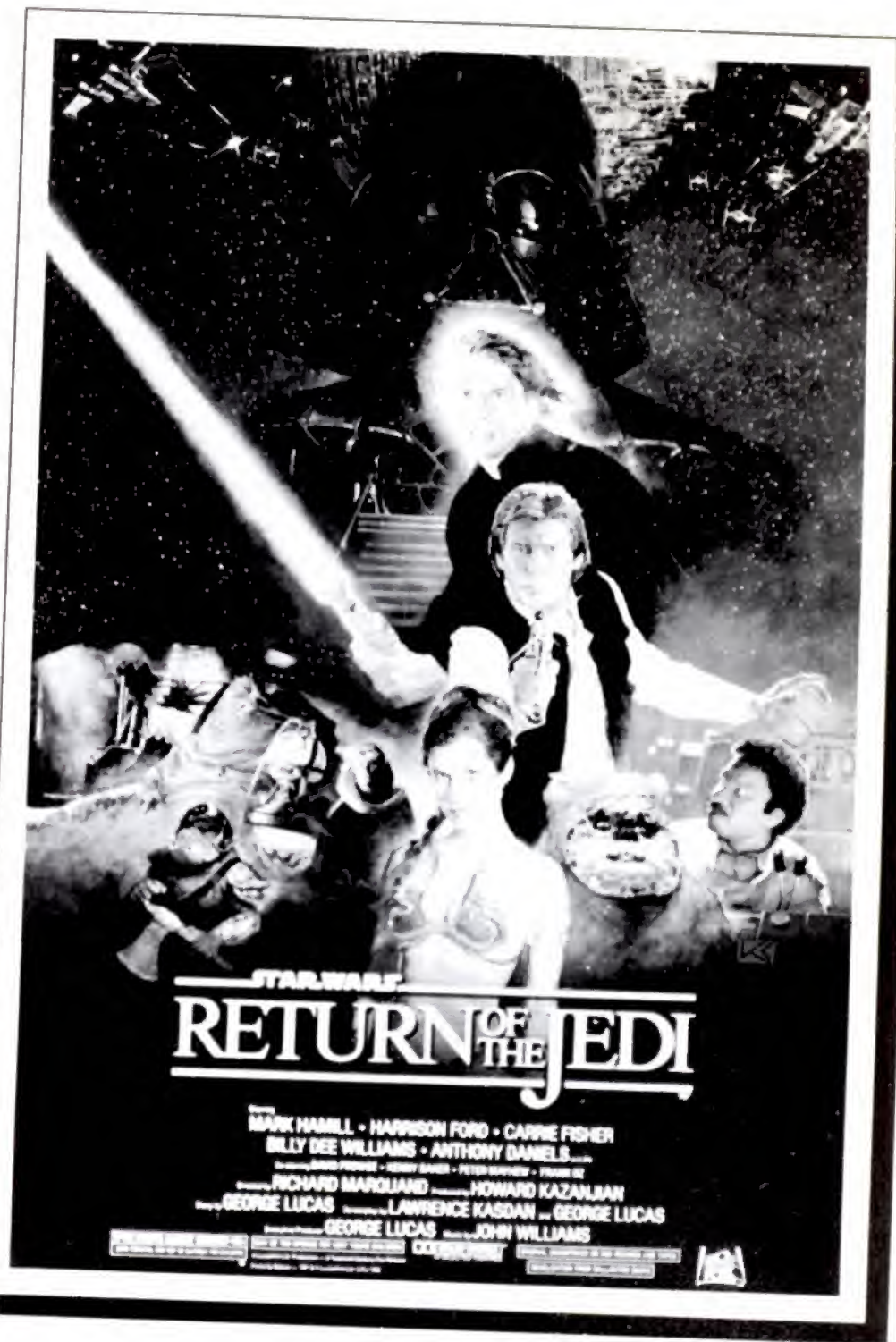
Chewbacca, and the Jawas. It was a nice combination.”

The novel idea of making the poster appear as if it were pasted on a wall came about almost by accident. “We had already done the lettering of the title, painting it in as part of the poster,” recalled Struzan. “Then, when we got the billing, we discovered there wasn’t enough room for all the credits, so we had to figure out a way to make more space. We thought, ‘Why don’t we take what we already have and paint it to look like it’s wild posted on top of other posters?’ That gave us the extra room we needed for the billing at the bottom. It was a case of Necessity being the Mother of Invention.”

The wild posting concept gave the artists a chance to add additional elements to their work. “It developed a life of its own,” recalled Struzan. “We had to do other art to fill it out, so we had a chance to include more characters. We added Han Solo in a little vignette circle, and Alec Guinness was an afterthought. It kind of grew to include everybody.”

One fan of the poster was George Lucas, who liked the swashbuckling image of Luke and Leia swinging from a rope, Errol Flynn style. “It captured a lot of people imaginations,” declares Struzan. “It’s part of the romance and style of the movie, which went backwards to capture a more romantic time. It’s got the flavor and adventure of ROBIN HOOD, and George was willfully going for that. I know a lot of art directors who call it their favorite movie poster. There’s something about it that seems to either capture the movie, or adds to it.”

Unfortunately, the original artwork for the piece is missing. “Nobody knows where it is,” remarks Struzan. “It somehow got lost in the shuffle.”



May, 1980 saw the release of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK with an exquisite poster by Roger Kastel, depicting Han and Leia in a romantic profile reminiscent of what Tom Jung had designed for his re-issue poster of GONE WITH THE WIND. Jung thought the painting was very well done. “I see the results of my design all over,” he said. “GONE WITH THE WIND was really notable for its schmaltziness. What I do is really kitsch art, but that’s what movies are supposed to be, and people like it, so that’s what they get.”

Jung got a chance to bring his ‘kitsch’ art to THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, when Fox issued a B style poster about a month after the film opened. “Sidney Ganis, the head of Lucasfilm’s marketing, called me directly on that picture,” revealed Jung. “I was told what to put in, but not what to do with them. I’m told that Darth Vader

in RETURN OF THE JEDI’s art by Kazu Sanu, the size of the characters was contractually determined; in particular Harrison Ford had become a big star.

should be big and Luke Skywalker should be small, and I design them accordingly. I’d work very quickly, coming up with a whole bunch of ideas, and submit them for approval. Sometimes, I would go up to San Rafael, and I met George Lucas once or twice up there, but he usually left everything up to Sidney Ganis.”

Because Jung’s artwork for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK is presented against a light blue background, a stylistic continuity with his STAR WARS paintings is not readily apparent. “I don’t really have a recognizable technique,” admitted Jung. “I adjust my technique to the problem at hand, because being an art director in advertising, it’s really the end result that I’m after. Other artists, like Bob Peak or Drew Struzan, have a style that

“Reports from early screenings were not encouraging. We were told not to spend too much money, because it was just another science-fiction movie.”

what it was. It still retains the flavor of the film, even though it's different. I started with the big helmet of Darth Vader in the background and added the lightsaber duel in the front. I found a good reference photo of Vader, and I photographically solarized that into pure black and white (the special photographic effects were done by Ron Sato). I had it blown up really big and added the texture to it. Then I painted over the top of that and altered and enhanced it. I drew and painted the figures of Luke and Darth at the bottom, then I went around painting the red background.”

Struzan left space at the bottom, where the film's former title would eventually go, but points out he has little control over what happens once the artwork is finished. “The lettering was most often left to the film company,” he said. “I'll suggest where it should go and what kind of type to use. Sometimes, I'd even letter it into the actual painting, as I did on the STAR WARS poster. It's always part of the design and balance of the piece to know where the lettering will go, but the artist is hardly the person in control.”

After the REVENGE OF THE JEDI poster was pulled because of change of title to RETURN OF THE JEDI, Lucasfilm hired Tim Reamer to paint a second poster, which portrayed two hands holding an ignited lightsaber. About a month after the film's premiere it was replaced with a style B one-sheet that featured some stunning artwork by Kakazuhiko Sano. Sano was a recent art school graduate who had worked on concept drawings for BLADE RUNNER and GREYSTOKE before discovering that a former colleague, Christopher Werner, was now an art director at Lucasfilm.

“Chris told me he had a project for me to illustrate,” related Sano. “It was to be an advertisement from George Lucas, congratulating Spielberg for the success of E.T. George Lucas wanted to show the STAR WARS characters holding E.T. on their shoulders. That gave my work a great introduction to the people at Lucasfilm, and George Lucas and Sid Ganis remembered it and asked me to work on RETURN OF THE JEDI. At first they said they wanted to make a retail poster. Actually, they were just keeping it a secret, because it was really for the job of the movie poster. They had already done a concept poster, the style A one-sheet of the hands holding the lightsaber, so for the B poster they wanted to show a lot of the film's characters. I was hired to do some black and white concept sketches, along with some other artists who were working with their own ideas. I came up with about five designs, and then narrowed it down to two of those. They liked my sketches, so we proceeded to do a color comp, and amazingly they liked it. About 10 days later, they said they wanted to use my painting.”

Even though Sano was painting most of the major characters, he wasn't allowed to view the rough cut; instead, he had to make due with reference photos. “There was an unlimited amount of material,” revealed Sano. “Lucasfilm was much smaller back in 1983, so there was more of a family feeling. I could just drive over there and get whatever I needed. I regret that Lucasfilm disbanded the art department. There's no longer a person working on that kind of thing anymore. Now they just hire artists through an agency in Los Angeles.”

Being fairly new in the field, Sano received guidance from Christopher Werner on what direction to take. “My work was subtle and sensitive, so Chris



Drew Struzan's style D one-sheet at first ran out of room for the credits, so it was expanded to appear as if posted on top of previous posters.

is immediately recognizable. There's probably a lot of posters I've done that people aren't aware of: PAPPILLON, THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING, and I got an award for LORD OF THE RINGS. I work with acrylics, pen and ink, colored pencils, air brush, finger smudges, razor blades, sponges—anything to get the the printed poster and the printed ad, which is the primary goal.”

In 1981, when EMPIRE was re-issued, Jung was chosen to create a new poster. For this version, he retained the basic background figure of Darth Vader but made Luke's head more prominent, placing him directly underneath the looming cape of Vader, suggesting the father-son relationship. In 1982, Jung did a third painting for EMPIRE, which was very close

to his previous design, with just a few changes. “It may not be that noticeable,” says Jung, “but in the '82 painting it was decided that Harrison Ford should get a bigger play, because he had emerged as a major star in RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK the year before. The similarity between the two paintings was partially because I wanted to keep the main theme of Darth Vader. I changed the color a little bit, and they went with it.”

For the third entry in the STAR WARS trilogy, Lucas and Sidney Ganis went back to Drew Struzan, asking him to work with art director Bill Pate in designing the first teaser poster for what was then being called REVENGE OF THE JEDI. “I wanted to do something different, in a design sense,” explained Struzan. “It's something that reads really good as a poster, big and powerful. You might see it from across the street, and you'd easily know

was always saying to make it more appealing," said Sano. "He wanted it brighter, with more colors and contrast. He also pushed Leia as a very sexy figure, which was quite surprising. To me, Leia was a virgin-like figure when she was introduced in STAR WARS. She falls in love with Han Solo in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, but I never envisioned her wearing this slave costume."

By 1983, the stars contractual demands determined how big their appearance would be in the final painting. "I had to make Luke, Leia, and Han Solo the same size," revealed Sano. "If I were doing it without contractual limitations, I would probably make Luke's face bigger, and Leia's body smaller. That was a big limitation for me. Lando Calrissian was treated in the same way. When I did the first version, Lando was very small, and then I had to make him bigger. I think the poster they used in Brazil was the only one they let out without correcting Lando's size. When the decision was reached to make Lando bigger, I was in Japan, so they hired an artist to make a section correction, by just replacing Lando's head. The artist couldn't find any of the reference material I had used, so as soon as I came back, I had to re-do his correction. In the meantime, the revised version was released in other countries, but the version they used in America was done by me."

When Sano began working

Don Smolen supervised the poster campaign for STAR WARS. "The reports from early screenings were not very encouraging," he recalled.



on concepts for RETURN OF THE JEDI, there appeared to be plenty of time to meet the May opening, but by the time he was chosen to do the final painting, the deadline had become more critical. "When the project got narrowed down to the final selections, everyone started to get very nervous," related Sano. "I should have been worried, but I was so new in the field I didn't understand the magnitude of the project. I was pretty relaxed, even though the work schedule became very tight."

In 1985, RETURN OF THE JEDI was re-released and the STAR WARS trilogy came to an appropriate close when Tom Jung, and Smolen, Smith and Connolly, designed the re-issue poster. "They had already hired another artist," revealed Smolen, "but at some point they decided the poster wasn't turning out the way they wanted. Apparently, Sid Ganis said to the people at Fox, 'Why don't you get the guys who did the first STAR WARS?' So we got a call from Fox, and they used our agency to do the poster. It was the same team that had done STAR WARS. Since it was a re-issue, we all knew exactly what was needed."

Tom Jung was gratified to return to the series once more, and remembers sending Sidney Ganis a letter, shortly before he was hired. "I told him that since I'd worked on STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, I'd like to get involved with RETURN OF THE JEDI," related Jung. "So I belatedly did get involved painting the re-issue poster, but it was not designed by me. I did the first poster for STAR WARS and the last poster on RETURN OF THE JEDI."

In 1987, Jeff Kilian was granted a license from Lucasfilm to create a poster commemorating the 10th anniversary of STAR WARS. Kilian approached Drew Struzan, who provided his usual exemplary work. He also personally signed 3,000 copies of the limited edition poster, making them highly collectable. "What I wanted was to go back to the real theme of the picture," stated Struzan. "By this time, the other two movies had been made, but this poster was just for the original STAR WARS. After 10 years, every-



Jung's rough of the STAR WARS art. "The concept presented to me was 'good and evil,'" he said. I hardly ever get more direction than that."

one had their own favorite scenes and characters, but it was obvious it was Luke Skywalker's story. It was his coming of age and dealing with the good side and the shadow side of life. That really made it easy to put Luke at the center and have him backed up by the image of Darth Vader. I actually drew the billing at the bottom of the poster into the artwork, which I took off the original poster, because that was all contractual. As far as whose image I had to use and their size, the film was old enough that there weren't those kind of demands. At the time of the film's original release, Peter Cushing was probably the movie's biggest star, but he didn't really figure into the story as far as I was concerned, so I passed on him early, to concentrate on the major characters. It's a character poster, which is mostly what I do."

For this year's release of the

special edition STAR WARS trilogy, Lucasfilm has supposedly picked an artist to create new posters, but his identity will remain secret until his work appears. "If they've picked me, they're keeping it a secret from me as well," joked Struzan. Tom Jung and Kakazuhiko Sano are also out of the running, although Jung would seem to be the logical choice since his six different posters make him the artist most associated with the STAR WARS saga. Perhaps Lucasfilm is going back to Jung's original idea, and using Frank Frazetta. Now that would be some poster! □

Grateful acknowledgement to Jeff Kilian, who provided ideas and research.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

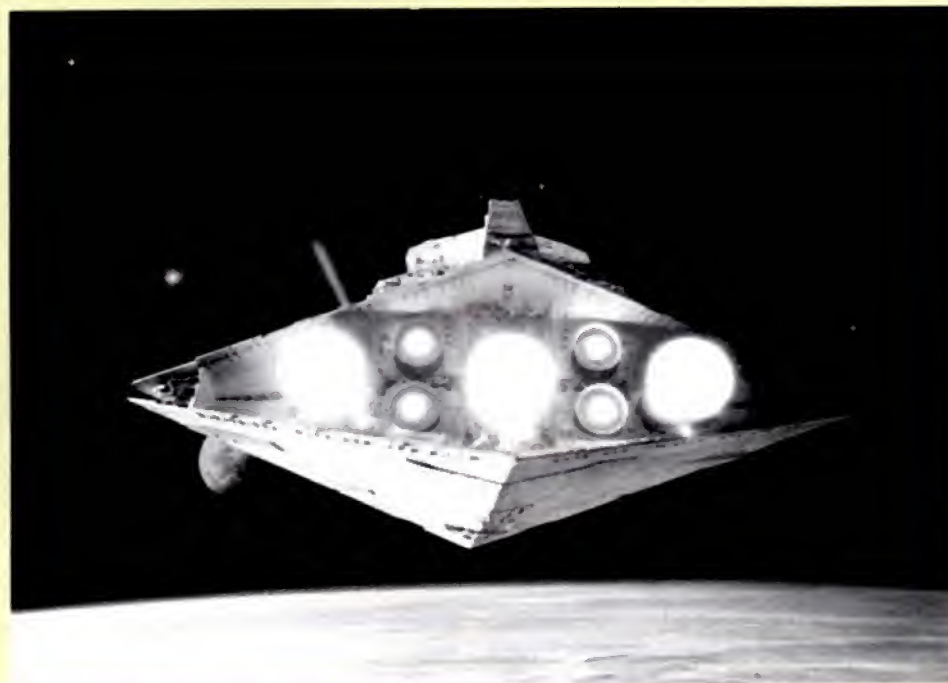
IMAX documentary goes behind the scenes of the STAR WARS special edition.

By Frank Garcia

SPECIAL EFFECTS: ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN, narrated by John Lithgow, began playing in IMAX® theatres worldwide last July. With over 130 permanent theaters in 20 countries, director Ben Burt and his colleagues are presenting audiences with a unique glimpse behind the cameras of a select group of contemporary fantasy and science fiction films. Covered in the film are secrets behind the creation of special effects for *JUMANJI*, *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, *KAZAAM*, and the *STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION* which premieres nationwide this month.

In addition to documenting contemporary filmmaking and exposing visual effects secrets, the short film also recreates a number of classic fantasy film moments. Prepared especially for the IMAX film format, King Kong's doomed battle against airplanes, perched atop the Empire State Building, is presented in full-sized color spectacle. The producers have also chosen to recreate two favorite moments from *STAR WARS* in the IMAX format. First is the opening chase scene between an Imperial Star Destroyer and the Rebel Blockade Runner; second is Han Solo's ship, Millennium Falcon, and its jump into hyperspace.

Because of his experience in directing two previous IMAX films, *BLUE PLANET* (1991) and *DESTINY IN SPACE* (1994), Susanne Simpson, an



An Imperial Destroyer cuts an imposing figure in the opening scene of *STAR WARS*, recreated in the IMAX format for the documentary *SPECIAL EFFECTS*.

executive producer with NOVA/WGBH Boston in charge of Large Format Films, addressed her idea of doing a movie about special effects to Ben Burt.

"IMAX is the grandest of any [film] formats!" grinned Burt. "From a photographic standpoint, it is very satisfying, and when you couple that with a big soundtrack it can overpower an audience!"

As co-producer Laurel Ladevich joined the project, the trio initially couldn't decide whether to do a behind-the-scenes examination of Hollywood movie-making or whether to conjure their own brief dramatic films and reveal how the magic was created. Enamored with the excitement of creating their own material for the IMAX format, the trio "got the rights to do a *Buck Rogers* adventure," ac-

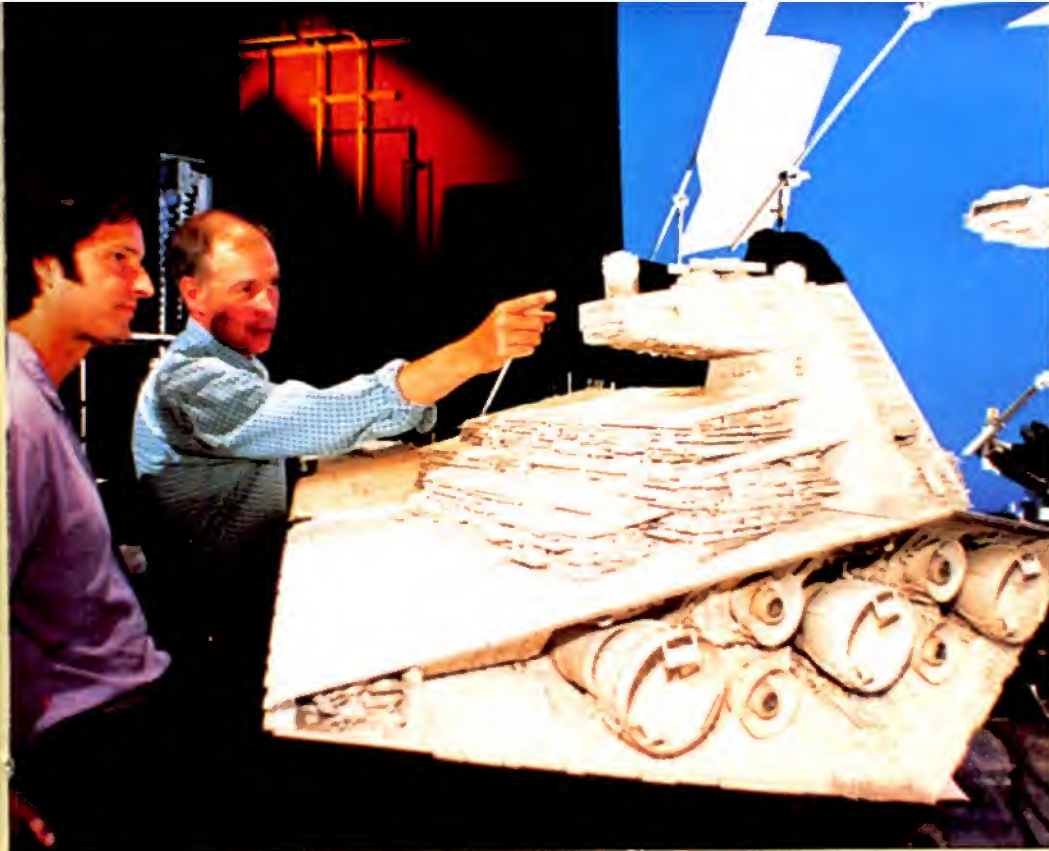
cording to Burt. "I wrote one, and we did a lot of storyboarding. We went through probably a dozen different script ideas from *Flash Gordon* to *Buck Rogers* to baseball with special effects in it. But due to the high cost of producing all of the effects in IMAX as well as making a documentary about it, it was just too expensive to do any of these ideas. We had to fall back to the other plan, which is to find other filmmakers busy making special effects films; therefore, we could document what they're doing. They're paid for doing that, and we're paid for just making a documentary."

Burt describes the appearance of the *STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION* in the *SPECIAL EFFECTS* documentary as accidental. "Fortunately, work on the *STAR WARS SPE-*

CIAL EDITION was being done right at that time. I was working at it, part-time as well, so I had a connection to it and had an established relationship with Lucasfilm. They very generously allowed me to bring the IMAX film crew and camera into ILM and on location to cover some of those events. It was just a happy coincidence that our calendars were lined up."

In addition to recreating those two scenes from *STAR WARS*, Burt's IMAX cameras spent five days with the production unit filming in the Yuma, Arizona, desert. There, they witnessed U.S. Marines portraying Imperial Stormtroopers searching for R2-D2 and C-3PO. Revealed for the first time is a scene of a stormtrooper riding a "dewback," an iguana-like beast which remained stationary when *STAR WARS* was first released in 1977. Now, the stormtrooper and the creature have been re-created via computer generated imagery, a technological feat not possible two decades ago.

"Because of schedules, we ended up having to shoot that material in August, which is the worst time of the year in the desert!" laughed Burt. "The heat necessitated that you work early in the morning and late in the afternoon. You really couldn't be in the desert in the midday. It was a kind of funny production schedule. It took a couple of days to do everything. You couldn't get quite as much done every day as you might or-



Working with the original models from STAR WARS, special effects technicians at Industrial Light and Magic set up the new shot of the Star Destroyer.

dinarily want to, because you had to clear out, break up your setups, and retreat to the shade during the mid-part of the day when it's 115 degrees or something."

The film also reveals technicians meticulously recreating, in greater detail than originally presented, our view of the Mos Eisley spaceport. Then, to recreate the opening moments of STAR WARS, a chase scene between two spaceships firing lasers at each other, Burttt went to the films' creator, George Lucas. "I did not have a long conversation with him," noted Burttt. "We asked if we could have permission to do the recreations, and he said, 'Great idea!' He was not involved in the production of it, but of course, we showed the footage to him when it was all completed. He seemed quite happy with it." Lucas is, in fact, a fan of the IMAX film format.

Burttt's discussions with Lucas went so far as to consider another kind of feasibility study. "I know we had a little discussion about 'Wouldn't it be great to do the whole film in IMAX?' They considered that back in the first STAR WARS," revealed Burttt. "But, it's just economically impractical. It's so expensive to shoot in 65mm negative film and, nowadays, scan it into the computer and output it. Technically, it can be done. Many people are doing it now. But it is very ex-

pensive per shot. And if you're doing a film with hundreds of shots, it's prohibitive. We were able to do it in our movie because we were doing three or four shots—something manageable for the money we had—but if you're doing a film with hundreds of shots, it would cost you two hundred million dollars or something."

To accomplish their task, the team raided Lucasfilm, in San Rafael, California, for the materials needed. "We got the original models, the matte paintings, out of the archives," said Burttt. "We shot against blue screen in IMAX and digitally composited the models and the planets. The lasers and explosions were put in strictly digitally. Some of the explosions were actually samples filmed for STAR WARS and [RETURN OF THE] JEDI. There's a library of explosions

KING KONG's conclusion is brought to life in color. Unlike the other recreations, accomplished with CGI, this scene used old-fashioned stop-motion animation.



shot in Vistavision. We were able to sample and scan into the computer a number of those explosions."

Surprisingly, Burttt revealed that "we went on a search for quite a while looking for Ralph McQuarrie's glass matte painting of Tatooine, and eventually found it laying on a pile of other dusty paintings." Although he claims that the quality of the storage facilities at Lucasfilm were very good, Burttt admitted that there were exceptions. What they found was a painted glass sheet with scratches on it as a result of mistreatment over the 20 years since it was last touched by human hands.

"So, we scanned the matte painting into a computer and touched it up and filled in the holes and scratches," said Burttt. "We added in some clouds and extended the painting a little bit because the painting wasn't quite big enough. It was painted for a Cinemascope aspect ratio. It was wide enough, but it didn't have enough top and bottom. A little was added to the bottom. Then, we did some tests, printing out to IMAX now. In IMAX, things are magnified terrifically, and any object on the screen is being viewed in great detail. We were worried the painting wouldn't work. When you look at STAR WARS [the matte painting] is pretty fuzzy!"

The artwork held up well, but it looked "flat." So, Burttt and company continued by adding "3-D clouds" to give dimensionality to the image. Over the years since the original trilogy was in production, Industrial Light & Magic, Lucasfilm's



SPECIAL EFFECTS goes behind the scenes to reveal the reworking of effects for the release of STAR WARS.

visual effects facility, has kept pace with technology and reinvested into their future. "The matte department is now completely digital," said Burttt. "We're no longer painting on glass by paintbrush. So, it was touched up in the computer digitally and given a bit more depth, while keeping the integrity and flavor of Ralph's painting. It's commonplace nowadays where the matte paintings are done digitally. You can manipulate it in all the ways that imagery can be changed."

With his third IMAX film now behind him, Ben Burttt is focusing his energies to what he does best: reworking, remastering the special sound effects in the STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION trilogy. Meanwhile, Ladevich and Burttt are in the discussions of yet another IMAX film and this one is closer to his heart. The topic? Sound. "It's in the development stages. It's about sound around us, like the SPECIAL EFFECTS movie. It would be about sound in our whole world, from music to traffic. We'll probably have a section about movie sound. It's an area of creativity, and we'll probably touch upon the realm of music as well." □

Cyber-Cinema

A brief look at the (still on-going) history of CGI effects.

Remember when it was rumored that computers would someday replace actors, directors, writers, key grips, et al? Somehow, that's all changed. Computer generated imagery (CGI) has slipped so seamlessly into film and enhanced it so much in such a short span of time that it now seems like a welcome friend. Sure, there are die-hard traditionalists who still cringe at the mention of the words "hard drive." But face it: CGI is not the threat it once seemed.

This is evidenced by the success of 1995's *TOY STORY*, which in one fell swoop erased all those bad feelings once held about CGI. "If anything, it proved that you can tell a feature length story in computer graphics," said Charles Solomon, a

noted animation critic and historian. "Because it was so successful at the box office, and deservedly so, there's a lot of interest within the animation industry in trying to develop other CGI features."

Bonnie Arnold, one of *TOY STORY*'s producers, said that CGI was one of the things that attracted her to the project. "I didn't know that much about technology," she said, "but I did feel it was something that was really going to have an effect on movie-making in general." She added that, ultimately, all involved knew that it was going to take more than CGI to make *TOY STORY* a hit. "The tech-

By Mike Lyons

nology is absolutely amazing—I don't think anyone can deny that. But that's interesting for all of about five minutes.

What will really keep moviegoers in their seats is a good story, interesting characters, and witty dialogue."

Henry Selick, the stop-motion master behind *TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS* and *JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH*, agrees. "Technique often has very little to do with the success of a film. *TOY STORY* is a great movie, very well-written, inventive, and the animation's great. The numbers at the box-office have to do with what a great film it is, not the technique. Now, it's interesting, because the popularity of comput-



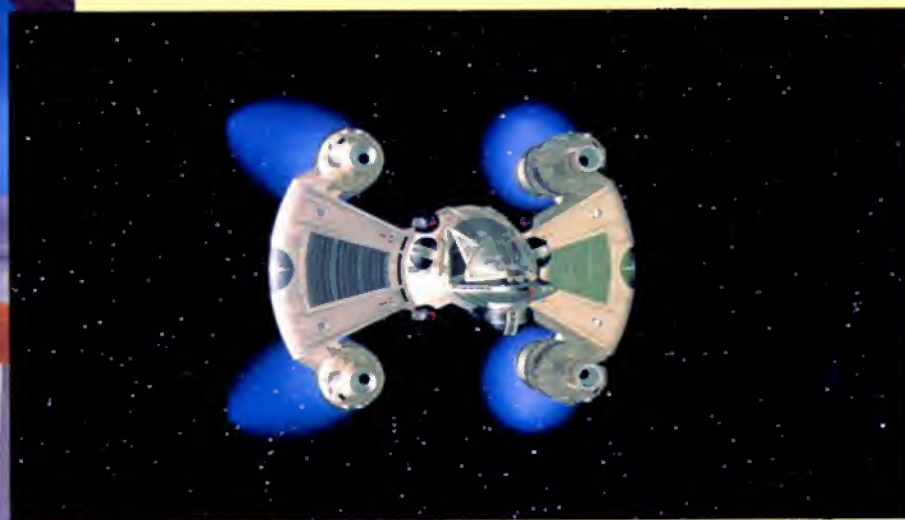
er animation is higher than ever because of that film. If it had been a failure, the technique would be blamed."

This whole concept, of getting past computers' bells and whistles and backing the technology up with some substance, took a long time for Hollywood to absorb. In fact, the roots of computer animation can be traced back about forty years. "The first films done in computer animation generally weren't for public entertainment," said Charles Solomon, who documents the nascent to present years of CGI in his book, *Enchanted Drawings*. "They were experiments done at places like Bell Labs to check into the graphic possibilities of some of their equipment." Also around this time, independent animator John Whitney began using war surplus computers for some of his experimental short subjects.

In the late '60s and early '70s, CGI broke out into independent animation and was used extensively in television for commercials and logos. It really wasn't until the early '80s, however, that computer animation really came to public awareness, when many in the special effects industry began to harness its power. Around this time, two films began to define

For *MARS ATTACKS*, Tim Burton abandoned stop-motion Martians in favor of computer-generated ones.





The success of TOY STORY (left) erased any lingering doubts about the commercial viability of CGI that might have been left over from the unspectacular performance of 1984's THE LAST STAR FIGHTER (above).

the medium. The first was Walt Disney Pictures' TRON (1982). The film boasted jaw-dropping effects created solely on computers which were anything but laptop. In fact, Solomon who covered TRON for several magazines at the time, said, "I remember visiting the Kray Supercomputer that did a lot of the computing for TRON. This was a real state-of-the-art kind of monster that used thousands of dollars of power every week. It was an amazing thing, almost a temple!" However, not many came to worship TRON, and the film fared poorly at the box office, due to a weak story line. In today's high-tech times, the film has emerged as sort of the Model T of computer graphics.

A similar problem befell THE LAST STARFIGHTER (1984). Nonetheless, Tim Landry, a visual effects technician at Dream Quest Images who has worked on such films as THE CROW, credits the film as the industry's wake up call for computer animation. "They did all the spaceships in the computer," said Landry. "It was really a milestone film because of that, even though it was a less than adequate film in many regards."

Films like TRON and LAST STAR-FIGHTER may have failed because they essentially show-

cased computer animation. When the stories weren't strong enough to back up the visuals, the audiences showed a lack of interest. Hollywood may have learned a lesson from this, and in the years that followed, CGI was used as a part of the story, instead of dominating the entire film. Said Solomon, "It was probably a couple of films, in terms of special effects—the second STAR TREK [1982] with the 'Genesis Effect' and YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES [1985] with the 'stain glass knight'—that really started to make people aware of what this new medium could do."

It was toward the end of the decade and in the early '90s that filmmakers would once again feel comfortable enough to let CGI play a larger role. In 1988's WILLOW, audiences saw the first big-screen example of "morphing," a technique in which one image smoothly blends into another. One year later, director James Cameron, would prove to be the shepherd of CGI special effects. In his 1989 film THE ABYSS, Cameron used the effects quite extensively to create the alien pseudopod, a transparent, shimmering, snake-like form that could mimic human features, as if shaping them out of clay. Mike Shea, a visual effects supervisor with Dream Quest Images, who won an Oscar for his work on the film, said, "I think what THE ABYSS did was break ground on film-like resolution for computer graphics. It finally said, 'Okay, we can

make this stuff work; we've got enough power behind this system now that we can make a short sequence for a picture.'"

Cameron recognized this and utilized the technology for his next film, TERMINATOR 2 (1991), in which computer graphics created the "liquid metal" T-100 Terminator. The film is amazing to watch, not only because of its landmark effects but also for that fact that in less than ten years CGI had moved from the "cartoony" light cycles of TRON to technology that could scan the image and movements of an actor into a computer and reproduce them three-dimensionally.

The technology was moving in leaps and bounds past other effects technology that had been commonplace in the industry. By the time JURASSIC

PARK went into production, CGI was beginning to cast a mighty shadow. Phil Tippett, who had created amazing stop-motion effects for such films as RETURN OF THE JEDI and ROBOCOP, was originally slated to create JURASSIC PARK's dinosaurs in the same way. Then, an early computer test impressed Steven Spielberg so much that he decided against stop-motion and took a chance on the emerging technology.

Tippett stayed on with the JURASSIC team, serving as "Dinosaur Supervisor." He actually found a way to blend the traditions of stop-motion with the cutting edge of computers by creating Dinosaur Input Devices, (D.I.D.'s). These specially designed three-dimensional models contained electronic sensors at each of their joints; when manipulated by Tippett's animators, the information was fed into computers. "It was pretty clear at the time that there weren't a great deal of computer animators with the skill or the training to do what was required in JURASSIC," said Tippett. "So it was a training ground for making the crossover between computer graphics and traditional stop-motion animators. There was a lot we learned from the computer graphics people in terms of the tools, and there was a lot that the computer graphics guys learned from our more tradi-

Walt Disney's TRON (1982) first introduced audiences and filmmakers to the tremendous visual potential of computer generated special effects.





CGI managed to create a credible talking character, with the help of Sean Connery's voice, in last year's DRAGONHEART.

tional knowledge of how things go together. "

In the following years, CGI was everywhere: from high-profile *cinéfantastique* like 1994's THE MASK, CASPER (1995) JUMANJI (1995), and DRAGONHEART (1996), to films outside the genre like SPEED (1994) and FORREST GUMP (1994). "Computers have been slowly creeping into the process, until they're taking over a good deal of it," said Dream Quest's Mike Shea.

In recent years, however, older techniques have been merging with or being used alongside CGI. Last year, INDEPENDENCE DAY used virtually every trick in the book, employing not only computers but a host of miniature effects

as well. Many effects houses are now using computers in similar ways—not for every job but just those for which it's best suited. This way of thinking seems to quash the aforementioned "computer scare." "I'm not against the computer technology," said Volker Engel, one of INDEPENDENCE DAY'S visual effects supervisors. "I try to use it when I want to use it."

A similar approach was employed in JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH. Director Henry Selick, who has helped bring stop-motion animation to the attention of a whole new generation, threw the gamut of effects into a bowl and mixed well. "Everything that's ever been done in film is in our

movie," laughed Selick. In a certain sense, GIANT PEACH hooked up a horse drawn carriage to a fighter jet, by combining computer generated imagery with stop-motion animation, so fluidly the audience cannot tell one from the other. Like many filmmakers today, Selick says that he wasn't using CGI because of its slick-look or state of the art technology; he used it because, in certain scenes, it was best for the job. He also adds that the last thing he's going to do is give in to technological pressures. "We don't all have to go after this gleaming, chrome future. The audience can be entertained other ways. So, I feel like I'm further and further out on a limb in the land of stop-motion,

but the last thing I'm going to do is throw in the towel and try to compete head-to-head with every one else in computers."

On the other hand, Selick's former mentor, Tim Burton, who more or less re-established the commercial viability of stop-motion by producing Selick's feature directing debut, THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS, would seem to have gone over to the enemy. In a virtual replay of what happened on JURASSIC PARK, Burton abandoned plans to animate the aliens of MARS ATTACKS with stop-motion, instead opting for CGI. Although he still plans to utilize stop-motion for THE CORPSE BRIDE, another all-puppet film along the lines of NIGHTMARE, nevertheless one has to wonder: does this signal some kind of death knell for integrating stop-motion effects into a live-action film? "I don't know," said Jim Mitchell, who supervised Industrial Light and Magic's effects on MARS ATTACKS. "I hope not. I have a tremendous love for stop-motion, as much as Tim. I certainly understand Tim's reason for pursuing stop-motion for the Martians. It's the nature of the characters that would easily have allowed them to be stop-motion."

Mitchell was careful to add, however, "I think there's a misperception about computer

Director James Cameron's films THE ABYSS (right) and TERMINATOR 2 (below) proved that CGI effects could convincingly integrate with live-action.



graphics. It's really up to the animator—whether it's stop-motion, cell animation, or computer graphics animation—as to how the character is perceived. You can create a walk any different way you want in stop-motion, and you can in computer graphics, too. I just think there's some benefits. My love for computer graphics character animation is the additional effects you can do—the idea of facial animation—and all of it really is a blend of what's come out of cell animation and stop-motion animation. Everything we do as computer graphics has a parallel in stop-motion or cell animation. The color rendering is very much like how you approach the lighting in cell animation. The nature of building the characters with skeletons or even armatures—it all parallels what's come before this technology. I think with characters as strong as these Martians are, the technology can work just as effectively as stop-motion or any other technique."

In addition to duplicating effects achieved through older techniques, CGI also has certain subtle advantages, in terms of allowing effects to be achieved more easily. For instance, a major challenge of any kind of composite work is registration—i.e., making sure that two images filmed separately will line up, when combined, exactly as if they had been shot together. This usually necessitated either a locked down camera, for static shots, or motion-control technology for camera movement, but with CGI "it's becoming less of a factor," according to Mitchell. "It used to be that when you wanted to do something with the camera moving, you had to employ some location motion-control. That obviously can be a big burden for the production in terms of time and money. But what the computer's allowing you to do is—if you've done everything right, if you've measured everything that exists out there—we're really good at recreating whatever the cameraman has done, as far as pan, tilts, and dollies. Typically, we don't involve ourself with motion-control anymore, so there's a lot more flexibility."

PHIL TIPPETT

"There weren't many computer animators with the skill to do what was required on JURASSIC PARK, so it was a training ground for linking CGI and stop-motion."



Phil Tippett's stop-motion dinosaurs (animated by Pete Kleinow, above) were replaced in JURASSIC PARK by the CGI effects of Dennis Murren (inset).

That additional flexibility is also apparent in traditional cell animation, and nowhere is this more true than at Walt Disney Studios. Each of their recent animated films has combined computer animation with traditional hand drawings to create some jaw-dropping set pieces: 1986's *THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE*'s climactic chase inside Big Ben; the ballroom dance in *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*; and *ALADDIN*'s "Cave of Wonders." "What's most exciting with computers and their use in animation," said Solomon, "is that the artists have gotten so sophisticated, their skills are so much more polished, that you can now combine media in ways that haven't been possible before and can give people visuals that, even a few years ago, would have been completely impossible to do."

In 1994, the studio broke new ground with the technology in the spectacular wildebeest stampede sequence in *THE LION KING*. For last year's *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME*, the filmmakers built up-

on that sequence for the crowd of revelers in the "Topsy Turvey" sequence. "Basically, inspired by the wildebeest stampede," said the film's co-director Kirk Wise, "we thought, 'Would it be that much of a stretch to stand these wildebeests up on their hind legs, give them clothes and hats, and instead of a stampeding herd, let's have a human herd of party goers.'"

Computers have also been a driving force at other animation studios. Rich Animation, the producers of 1994's *THE SWAN PRINCESS*, will use CGI extensively in its next project, *FEATHER TOP*, due out in 1998. Richard Rich, the film's director and the founder of the studio, says that, now, CGI is a perfect tool for animation, because it can assist, but it can't do everything. "It's going to be quite a while before computers can in-between with the finesse that animators have, getting all the overlap and the 'squash and stretch' and all the stuff that is just a sense of timing that animators add to it." Rich also noted, "Where you have [horse drawn] carriages and inanimate objects that need to hold a par-

ticular volume and form, that's where the computer is the best."

1995's *BALTO*, produced by Steven Spielberg's Amblimation studio, used CGI for many sequences. David Moorehead, who was in charge of computer graphics, says that what's most exciting about CGI is the fact that new aspects of the technology are unraveling with each passing day. "We keep feeding it by generating new technology, and people keep using it in different ways," he said. "It's a self-perpetuating circle now, and it's gotten to the point where everybody's using computers to do all kinds of things, and animation is one of the most interesting uses of it I've seen."

While many studios were letting computer imagery go hand in hand with traditional animation, one company launched whole-heartedly into this uncharted territory of bits and bytes. In 1979, George Lucas initiated a computer division of Lucasfilm, Ltd. which in 1986 was incorporated as an independent company named Pixar. This digital animation studio quickly established itself as the leader in applying computer graphics to filmmaking.

In 1986, Pixar produced *LUXO, JR.*, the first computer-animated film to be nominated for an Academy Award. For its innovation and breakthrough use of visuals, the simple story of "a desk lamp and his son" has been dubbed "the *STEAMBOAT WILLIE* of computer animation." Ironically, there were other computer animated shorts prior to *LUXO*, including *THE ADVENTURES OF ANDRE AND WALLY B* (1984) and *TONY DEPELTRIE* (1985). According to Charles Solomon, what distinguishes *LUXO, JR.* from these efforts is the fact that director John Lasseter was able to call upon his earlier experience as an animator at Disney. "John is very well trained in the principles of hand-drawn animation, so he knew how to apply those principles to give personalities to those two lamps. Because he was able to imbue them with that feeling of personality there's a warmth to that film that previous computer generated imagery really hadn't produced."

continued on page 62


VAMPIRES, ON A

Wherein the evolving

By David J. Skal

Did you ever notice how the best scenes in vampire movies tend to happen on staircases? You know the picture—the draped, pallid figure with blazing eyes and crimson lips posing majestically on an ancient, crumbling stairway that somehow represents all human possibilities, our deepest hopes and fears. Capable of bestowing death or granting eternal life, the vampire can lead us up the stairs to a transcendent superhuman reality, or as Poe might have put it: down, down inexorably down to our basest instincts and animal desires. In the mirror the vampire reflects nothing, yet in reality it reflects everything. Sometimes the creature spreads its cape in a reflexive gesture, assuming a stance that is a dark travesty of crucifixion, for the vampire is both savior and destroyer. It is on staircases that vampires condescend to mingle with mortals, on staircases that they greet and seduce their victims, dispatch their enemies, descend to commune with the lower realms, the better to entice us with the promise of a higher consciousness and destiny.

My first impression of vampires came in 1959 with a television skit on *The Garry Moore Show* in which an American housewife (Carol Burnett) discovered Count Dracula (Durward Kirby) hiding in her living room closet. “Good evening!” he said, striking a rigid pose in evening clothes. She slammed the door. I was seven years old, but even then knew that this *meant something*. Once open to vampires, the closet door could never be slammed—not really, anyway. I don’t remember anything else about the broadcast, except that my mother explained the basics: Vampires, she said, came out of coffins; they bit you on the neck; they wore “fancy” clothes, and they always said “Good evening.”



Bela Lugosi's Count beckons to us in DRACULA. Typically it is on staircases that the vampire descends to mingle with mortals, to tempt with the promise of transcendent supernatural reality.

STAIRCASE

author examines the eternally significance of the undead.

Soon after, vampires began to pop up everywhere in the bedroom community of Garfield Heights, Ohio, where I grew up. While a third grader at Garfield Park Elementary School, I can remember an older girl on the playground—I'll call her Maxine—who significantly deepened my appreciation of things undead. Maxine was the classic kid of whom parents disapproved; she was a rambunctious tomboy who "had ideas." Maxine was already free-falling through puberty while the rest of us stood merely tottering at the edge of the abyss. As a denizen of this scary, uncharted realm, Maxine was a wealth of information on fascinating subjects. She knew about unpleasant medical conditions of certain of our teachers. She could recount the details of fatal amusement park accidents, knew what went on during an autopsy, and had a pretty good idea what happened to rats after they ingested poison.

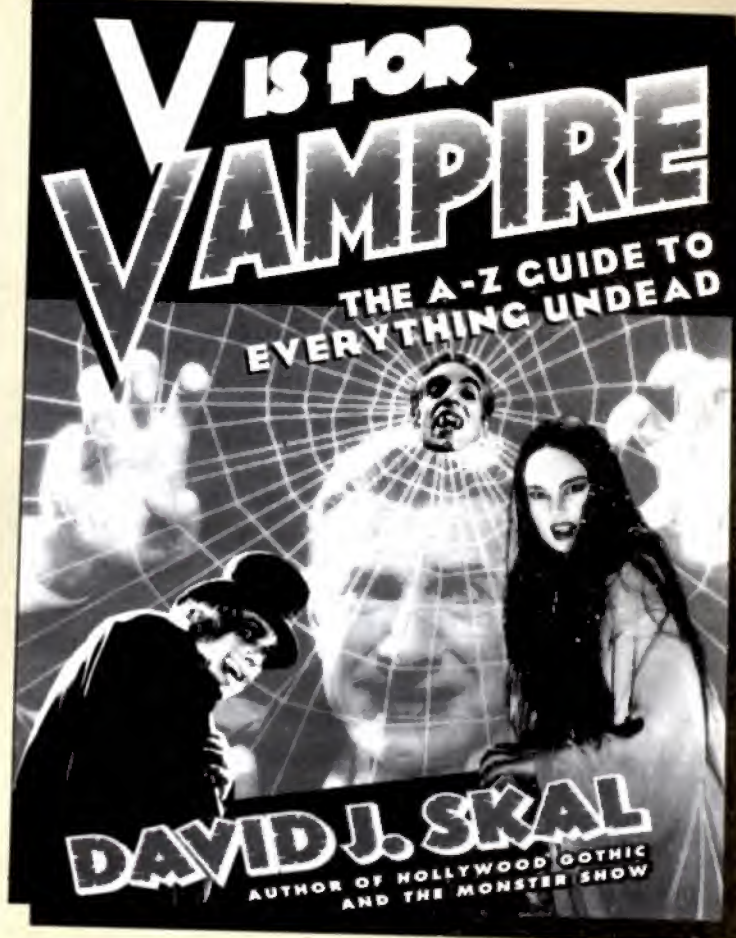
But most of all, Maxine knew about vampires. She had been reading up, and she was the only one among us who had been to the Mapletown Theatre where a film called *THE BRIDES OF DRACULA* was a featured matinee. She elaborated on the information first provided by my mother: Vampires, Maxine explained, were pale people who lived forever as long as they stayed out of the sun and out of churches. The male vampires generally wore tuxedos, and the female vampires long white gowns—being undead, apparently, was a lot like getting married. You could kill them by driving a wooden stake through their hearts—Maxine sharpened a Popsicle stick on the sidewalk to make the point vivid.

Maxine would hold her vampire court every day in the most shadowy corner of the playground she could find, and soon she began bringing in the most amazing magazines—illustrated publications with titles like *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Castle of Frankenstein*. They were just the sort of things parents and teachers and librarians loved to confiscate and destroy. They were worse than *Mad* magazine—almost as bad as *Playboy*. Which, of course, made them all the more interesting. And one day Maxine brought in a magazine with a full-page, life-sized portrait of the male vampire from *The Brides of Dracula*. The picture was printed with special instructions: you were supposed to push thumb-

tacks through the back of the photo, just where the monster's fangs were peeking out, then roll the magazine up and whack yourself on the neck with it—thus simulating an "actual" vampire attack. (I don't know anyone who actually tried this, but dares were made.)

You may be wondering why on earth third and fourth graders in the early '60s were so captivated by images of the walking dead. While researching this period for my previous book, *The Monster Show*, I was surprised to discover that I had largely forgotten my real source of anxiety at the time: Cold War atomic jitters and the daily threat of mass death that fairly shrieked from newspaper headlines as the world's supply of available megatons piled up, and up, and up. Immortal monsters like Dracula offered an alternative to death, or at least an imaginative one. There wasn't much difference, after all, between a vampire's protective crypt and a fallout shelter—both amounted to fantastic bargaining chips with the unacceptable prospect of personal annihilation. My own active interest in Dracula—the point at which I really became a player, buying the fan magazines (or begging my parents to buy them for me), assembling plastic monster model kits, even producing my own eight-millimeter horror extravaganzas—coincided precisely with the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. I was amazed to find, on the microfilm reels of old *Billboard* charts, that the number one pop song in American during the missile crisis was Bobby "Boris" Pickett's "Monster Mash"—a highly appropriate "dance of death" presided over by a mad scientist, with a full complement of man-made monsters, werewolves, ghouls—and, of course, vampires.

We survived the missile crisis, and my interest in monsters metamorphosed. To a working-class kid with untraditional ambitions—but no realistic models or expectations of socioeconomic escape—vampires came to represent a vague fantasy of class transcendence and power (Dracula, with his evening clothes, aristocratic charisma, and apparently bottomless bank coffers, is the "classy" monster *par excellence*). In my later adolescence, the ambiguous eroticism of Bela Lugosi's seduction of Dwight Frye in the 1931 film version of *DRACULA* became a powerful focus of sexual possibilities I then found frightening in the extreme.



This article is excerpted from *V IS FOR VAMPIRE: THE A-Z GUIDE TO EVERYTHING UNDEAD* by David J. Skal. © 1996 by David J. Skal. Reprinted by arrangement with Plume, an imprint of Dutton Signet, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.

My interest in vampires took a backseat to college and career issues for a couple of decades, but returned with a sudden urgency in the late 1980s when I researched and wrote my book *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of "Dracula" from Novel to Stage to Screen*. It was not until after I had completed the book that I realized, with a bit of a shock, that I had essentially repeated the death-anxiety ritual of my childhood, immersing myself in vampire culture as a largely unconscious response not to a nuclear threat but instead to the AIDS epidemic, which had claimed literally countless friends and acquaintances. In this book I explore the AIDS-vampire connection deliberately, along with the vampire's persistence as an ambiguous, shifting symbol of alternative sexualities.

Vampires, obviously, know how to sneak up on us and are capable of pop cultural transformations as fantastic as anything imputed to them in folklore. The undead mean many things to many people, and I hope that *V Is for Vampire* will provide an accessible overview of a vast and apparently inexhaustible topic. It is not a formal encyclopedia. The selections and opinions make no pretense of anything but subjectivity, and I have frequently favored the odd and obscure over subjects that have been covered extensively elsewhere. In short, consider the book as a starting point, not a final destination, as you begin to climb and explore your own vampire staircase. *V Is for Vampire* may send you soaring to your belfry or scurrying to your cellar—but, if I've done my job, you'll never look at vampires in exactly the same way again. □

ALIEN NATION

The Newcomers return to face the terrorist

By F. Colin Kingston

ALIEN NATION: THE UDARA LEGACY is the fifth in a series of made-for-television movies for the FOX Network. Based on the 1988 feature of the same name, the series and subsequent TV movies chronicle the adventures of the alien "newcomer" Francisco family and human cop Matt Sikes (Gary Graham). All principal cast members return for this production, as does director and executive producer Kenneth Johnson (V).

"What we discover in the UDARA LEGACY is that there was a resistance group about the spaceship," said Johnson. "The most radical wing of that resistance group was called the UDARA, not unlike the extremist groups in the Mideast today. They believed that any means is justified to achieve the ends they were trying to accomplish. Since the ship has crashed on Earth there is no reason to fight the overseers anymore, of course. However, there are still a number of the UDARA out there that have been programmed to accomplish various missions when they are called upon to do it. When they are given a certain key phrase it triggers an absolute and unswerving loyalty to whatever mission they are assigned to. In our story someone here on earth has gotten hold of that list and is now using those programmed people to accomplish various felonies and robberies and even a political assassination attempt. We also discover that a member of the Francisco family [Susan] was a member of the UDARA while aboard the slave ship. One of the Francisco children has also been programmed and becomes a pawn in a political assassination attempt. It is a pretty intense story that has a kind of MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE feel to it. Harry and Renee Longstreet wrote it from an idea of mine."

Lane Smith (**LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN**) guest stars as United States Senator Silverthorne, a man locked in a tight re-election battle with a newcomer. It is Silverthorne who becomes the object of the assassination attempt. Peggy McCay (**THE TRIALS OF**



Sikes (Gary Graham) and George (Eric Pierpoint) comfort George's son Buck (Sean Six), who is wounded during an assassination attempt by the Udara terrorist group.

ROSIE O'NEIL) also guest stars as Aura the mysterious leader of the UDARA.

As with any ALIEN NATION movie, the focus of the main story remains on Detectives Sikes and Francisco. Gary Graham enjoys the way the relationship has grown between the two characters. "We have turned into true partners, and yet partners, being like married couples, fight," said Graham. "George and Sikes are an ideal team, though. Where one leaves off the other picks up. Matt is more streetwise; George has a much more analytical mind and heightened senses. Between the two, they make a good crime-solving pair."

While some fans of the series might be surprised to find out that Susan Francisco (Michele Scarabelli) was a member of the terrorist-like UDARA movement, Scarabelli is pleased with the turn of events. "I thought it was a marvelous idea," she said. I don't think it is out of character. It is in keeping with the matriarchal society that the aliens come from. The women are strong. Susan had choices to make. The way she chose to

survive and to maintain hope of surviving was by being in the UDARA."

There are differences between doing ALIEN NATION as a weekly series and as a series of TV-movies. Said Johnson, "The good news with a two-hour movie is that you get a little more money and a little more time, so you can tell a little bigger story. That can come back to haunt you, though. Sometimes the studio and the network feel like you have to save the world every time you go out. The story has to be bigger to justify the expense."

Johnson knows what makes the series successful. "ALIEN NATION has always been about the interplay between the characters more than anything else—that sense of one culture clashing with another culture. All the space stuff and the science fiction aspects of it have always been sort of the background and the canvas that we play on." At times, Johnson has had to fight with the network to keep the series going in the direction he envisions. "When we were doing the series FOX had a lot of trouble understanding what the show was about. They sort of had in mind that it was LETHAL WEAPON with aliens. I finally convinced them that no, it is not. If anything, it is like HEAT OF THE NIGHT with aliens or CAGNEY AND LACEY with aliens. I must have had the same meeting a half dozen times where they'd say, 'We just want to have one more meeting to make sure we all understand what the show is about.' I finally said, 'The show is about an hour long—get out of my way and let me do it.'"

Assisting Johnson with THE UDARA LEGACY is producer Ron Mitchell. Mitchell was involved in the first ALIEN NATION television movie DARK HORIZON but skipped the next two. He has returned for the fourth and fifth films. Says Mitchell, "I view my job as being creatively supportive to the director and at the same time being responsible to the studio and production manager for the costs. In this situation you have an executive producer (Johnson) who is not only very responsible creatively but is also real responsible financially. We are a very good team and we un-

ION

t Udara Legacy.

derstand each other. There is no such thing as confrontational filmmaking here. We all like each other and support each other.”

Being supportive is the key to Mitchell's success. “It doesn't take a lot of money to make something good. It takes extra talent, more insight, and extra preparation. If you treat the crew right, they will save you money because they will go that extra effort. We are all a family here and we have a good time making these shows and it shows on the screen.”

ALIEN NATION is known for exploring social issues, and Johnson is very proud of this fact. “I think the reason people like ALIEN NATION is that we are dealing with human issues that all families deal with. The fun of doing it on this show is that we are seeing it through the lens of an alien culture. When the Francisco family sits down to have their meal of spleens and gonads and stuff their dinner table talk is just one step from reality. It gives it a sense of humor and a different focus than we normally look at and it makes it fun.”

The thought of another alien culture being portrayed on television brought some interesting letters to Johnson. “I had a letter from a black doctor in Detroit when we started out who said he heard our show was coming on, and that he was angry because he thought we didn't need another alien show coming on. He wanted a show about the black experience. He said then he saw ALIEN NATION and said it was about the black experience. The Asian community thinks our show is about them. The Hispanic community thinks it is about them. We get awards from all these people because that is what ALIEN NATION should be all about—the interrelationship between species and races and the sense that we can work together if we want to.”

Ratings will determine whether or not FOX will order additional TV-movies for ALIEN NATION. Said Johnson, “The actors' contracts are all up after this one, so they are going to have to do some re-negotiating, but we are hopeful that they will. It is a family show, and I wouldn't want to be involved in it unless we had our family of actors back.” □



Top: Peggy McCay stars as Avra, mysterious leader of the Udara movement. Bottom: The new film reveals the secrets of the Udara, a secret cadre of freedom fighters from the Newcomers' slave ship.

PINKY &

The Emmy-winning would-be world rulers return for a second season.

By Mike Lyons

Only at Warner Brothers Television Animation could an office joke flower into a series. Peter Hastings, producer of *PINKY AND THE BRAIN*, recalls that the initial concept sprang from an off-the-cuff remark by senior producer Tom Ruegger, when the two were developing the show *ANIMANIACS*. "He mentioned to me, in a vary casual way, 'What if these two guys working for us were trying to take over the world?' It was a casual joke you would make about someone that you work with. But it ended up being a really strong idea."

The idea would form the basis for the show, which centers on two white laboratory mice with incredibly lofty ambitions: each night, the diminutive plotters try to hatch an elaborate scheme to take over the world. Brain, with his over-sized cranium and sloping brow, is a cornucopia of intelligence, develop-



Tom Ruegger helped develop *PINKY AND THE BRAIN* as a spin-off from the successful *ANIMANIACS* show.

ing each plan carefully and refusing to give up when said plans go awry (usually by the end of each episode). Pinky, on the other hand, is pretty much just along for the ride. As the Yin to Brain's Yang, Pinky has the child-like misunderstanding of the world that we all experi-

ence from time to time.

PINKY AND THE BRAIN originally began as a segment of the highly popular *ANIMANIACS* series. Steven Spielberg, producer of that series, has been a champion in the realm improving television animation. "We were fortunate to have Steven involved since the get-go, here at Warner Bros. animation," said Tom Ruegger. "He, more than any other person, was able to say to the powers that be, 'We want to spend that extra money to make this a quality program.' So, that started our tradition here with *TINY TOONS*, and we've tried to keep the quality up since then."

Of all the supporting characters in the WB cartoon canon, one has to wonder why *PINKY AND THE BRAIN* were chosen to launch out on their own. Opined Hastings, "I would categorize the show as 'intelligently silly.' The fact that it is intelligent certainly appeals to a lot of adults. Like *ANIMANIACS*, it's full of adult humor and references, which basically got in there because we liked writing things that made us laugh, instead of trying to second guess what kids would like."

So, each week the two residents of Acme Labs concoct plan after plan: clogging all tunnels with cheese, so that only mice can get through, or maybe convincing the world to go skinny-dipping and then stealing everyone's clothes. One would think coming up with such off-kilter ideas is a real chore, but Ruegger said, "Once we agreed that in each episode *Pinky and the Brain* were trying to take over the world, the stories really started to flow."



Hastings added that he usually doesn't have to go too far when searching for story ideas. "For me, a lot of it is reflecting things that I see in society, or read a lot about in the papers. For example, we did a show where, in the '50s, Brain decides to make himself popular on a kids' show, then freezes himself and forty years later, those kids will all be adults and will glorify him. That idea came when I heard that Steven Spielberg was going to make a feature film out of *CASPER*, which made me think of baby-boomers who have now risen to positions of power."

Ruegger notes that some of the more creative ideas actually stem from bouts with writer's block. "I remember, early on, Peter and a few of us were having a creative log jam. I think what came from that was, 'What would we like to actually see visually?' From that point of view, we have come up with the absurd visuals that have happened, like *Pinky and the Brain* as jockeys, or the idea of Brain walking around with his tiny head sticking out of a human-size body. So, some of the ideas come from a very specific visual idea."

Not all developments have been this easy. A running gag on the show involves Brain asking Pinky, "Are you pondering what I'm pondering?" Pinky inevitably replies with an off-the-wall answer (for example,

Each week, the ambitious Brain—along with the adorable, good-hearted but utterly incompetent Pinky—hatches a scheme to "try to take over the world."



the BRAIN



Pinky (left) and the Brain (above): lab mice bent on world domination.

"Yeah, but where are we going to get a duck and a garden hose at this hour?") that is definitely not what Brain is thinking. Ruegger admitted, "The responses to 'Are you pondering what I'm pondering?' are very difficult to think of, even though they tend to be just non-sequiturs."

Helping to flesh out the warped vision of the writers are the voices. Veteran voice actor Maurice LaMarche provides the deadpan yet intellectual Orson Welles-like delivery of the Brain. "We were casually putting together a tape to present the show," recalled Hastings, "and the second we heard Maurice read the Brain's lines in the Orson Welles' voice, we said, 'Oh, that is so perfect.'"

As Pinky, Rob Paulsen, who already lends his talents to TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES, BUMP IN THE NIGHT and TAZ-MANIA, adds a distinct notch to his resume with the dim yet loyal sidekick. (Paulsen also continuously utters the word "Narf!", Pinky's vocal tick, which is fast on its way to becoming the show's catch phrase.) "Rob Paulsen's voice for Pinky, with this quasi-cockney accent, was completely unplanned," said Hastings, "but it was a terrific compliment to Maurice's Orson Welles."

The unique voices come together with the equally unique artistry to form a show that, according to Hastings, carries on

a Warner Bros. legacy: cartoons that are smart enough for adults and kids. "I remember when I saw Jack Benny saying, 'Well...', I thought he was stealing a bit from Bugs Bunny. It's always been a tradition of Warner Bros. cartoons to satirize pop-culture, so we're happy and proud to continue that."

These cultural references flung about each episode are just one reason audiences have latched on to the two great white hopes. "There's another aspect of it that's a little more subtle," said Hastings. "Pinky and the Brain are mice trying to take over the world, and although they tell people constantly, nobody knows and nobody ever believes them. The result is that Pinky and the Brain have a secret, and the only people who know are Pinky, the Brain, and the people who are watching. We sort of share in their adventure in that way."

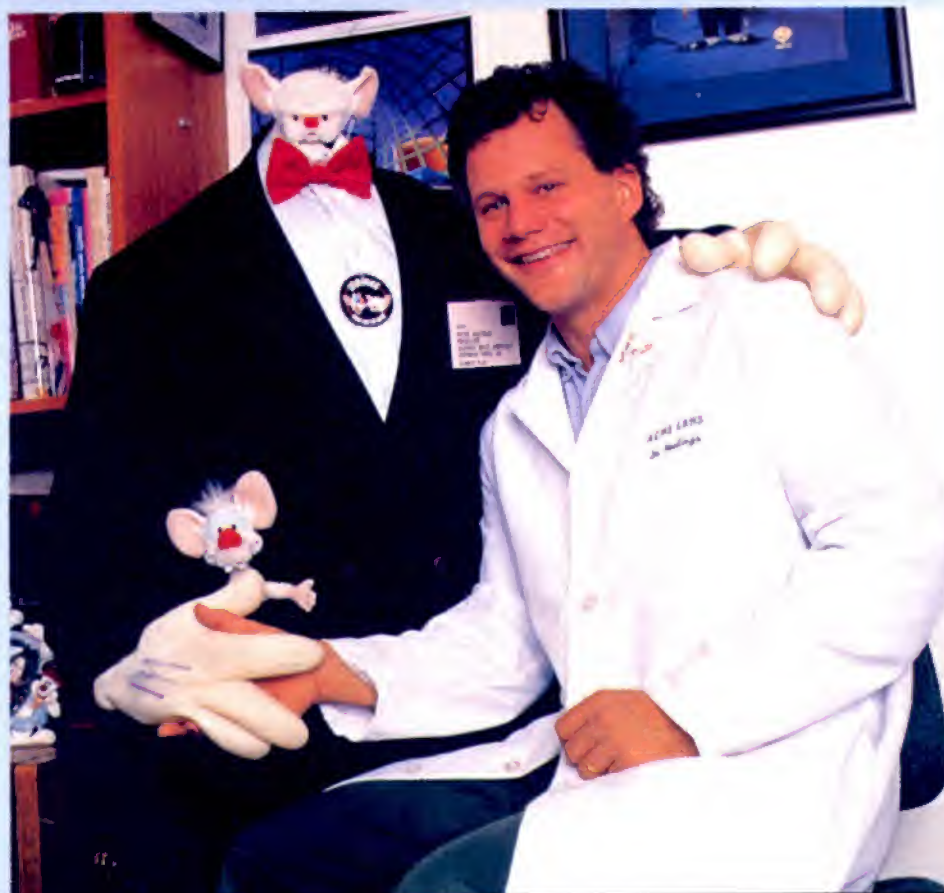
According to Ruegger, this aspect has helped win over many children, "I think they relate to the little guy trying to grab some power. From a kid point of view, it's sort of an empowering program."

Young and old can expect

some changes for PINKY AND THE BRAIN this season. The show had been airing on the WB Network twice each week, Saturday mornings and Sunday evenings. This fall, the Saturday morning madness continued, but the Sunday night prime time installments were placed on hiatus until January, when the show is scheduled to return in a decidedly different format. "Currently, we're keeping [Pinky and the Brain] in Acme Labs," explained Ruegger, but added, "We've been trying to turn the show into more of a sitcom, which has been a challenge, because the show has a real adventurous quality to it."

Part adventure, part sitcom, early morning and prime-time, PINKY AND THE BRAIN continues to thrive and grow. Add to this the explosion of merchandise inspired by the show, and it's almost as if the two 'toon town denizens are succeeding in taking over the world. According to Ruegger, however, the two rodents would have other priorities if their conquest ever succeeded. "Once all the cats are secured with duct tape," he said, "they would begin their benevolent rule." □

Producer Peter Hastings poses with a replica based on one of the shows most memorable sight gags: the Brain uses a robot body to try to pass for human.



A PINKY AND THE BRAIN CHRISTMAS

Director: Rusty Mills. Fox Network, 30 mins with commercials, 12/95. Voices: Maurice LaMarche, Rob Paulsen.

As the familiar opening credits begin, with holiday lyrics substituted in the theme song, one might expect a seriously cynical tone from A PINKY AND THE BRAIN CHRISTMAS. What you get is a dead-on satire of Christmas commercialization, a take-off on well-known holiday TV perennials, and an upbeat ending that succeeds without being sappy.

The special, which won an Emmy, centers on the Brain's scheme to use the holiday to take over the world (of course): he concocts a toy replica of himself (dubbed "Noodle Noggin"), which has the ability to hypnotize humans; all Brain needs do is get one under every Christmas tree in the world. The opportunity arrives when he spots an ad in the paper that reads, "Elves wanted: Apply North Pole." He and Pinky disguise themselves as rather bizarre looking elves (they claim they're not different, just "Canadian elves") and begin working in the mail room of Santa's workshop.

Soon, Santa's helpers are churning out Noodle Noggins, and the mighty mouse is ready to broadcast his hypnotic message of domination to the world. This is where the show's running subplot pays off: throughout the story, Pinky's efforts to deliver his letter to Santa are continually thwarted. When the Brain gets a hold of the letters just as he's about to broadcast, he discovers that Pinky asked nothing for himself but instead asked Santa to help his friend Brain's wishes come true. Just like the Grinch and Ebenezer Scrooge, Brain has a change of heart—so touched by the gesture that he cancels his world takeover and wishes everyone Merry Christmas, with a great deal of tear-soaked blubbering.

A PINKY AND THE BRAIN CHRISTMAS benefits from sharp writing perfectly in tune with pop-culture sensibilities. Scripter Peter Hastings has written a special that sends a few zingers over the heads of kids, aiming straight for their parents; and director Rusty Mills crafted a show which invokes many of the TV classics that they seem to be parodying. This is what makes the sentimental conclusion work. As Pinky and the Brain exchange gifts, we get a glimpse at something rare: television animation that actually takes time out for a quiet moment and proves it doesn't have to be all carbon copy Tex Avery.

● ● ● Mike Lyons

L5:

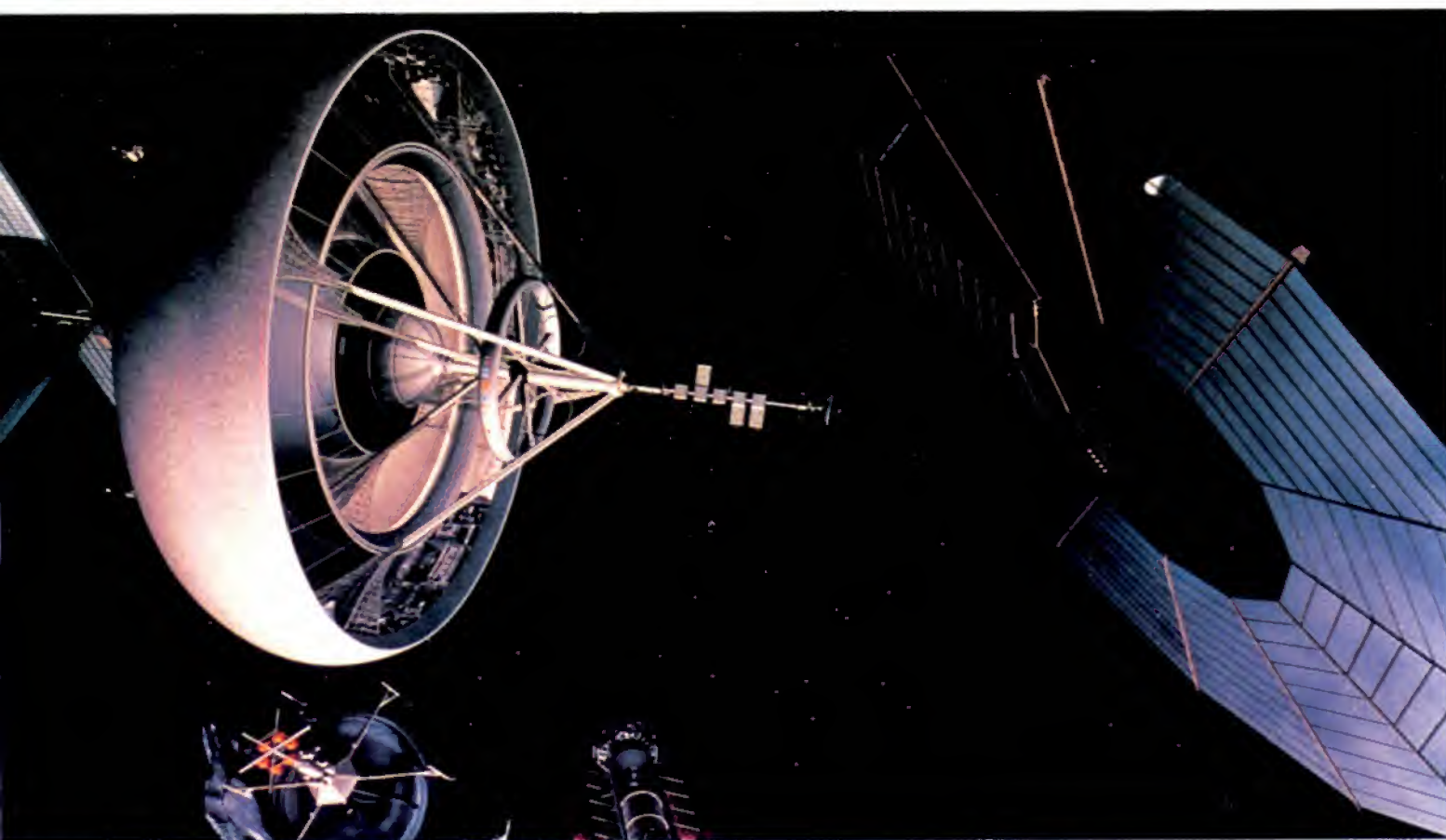
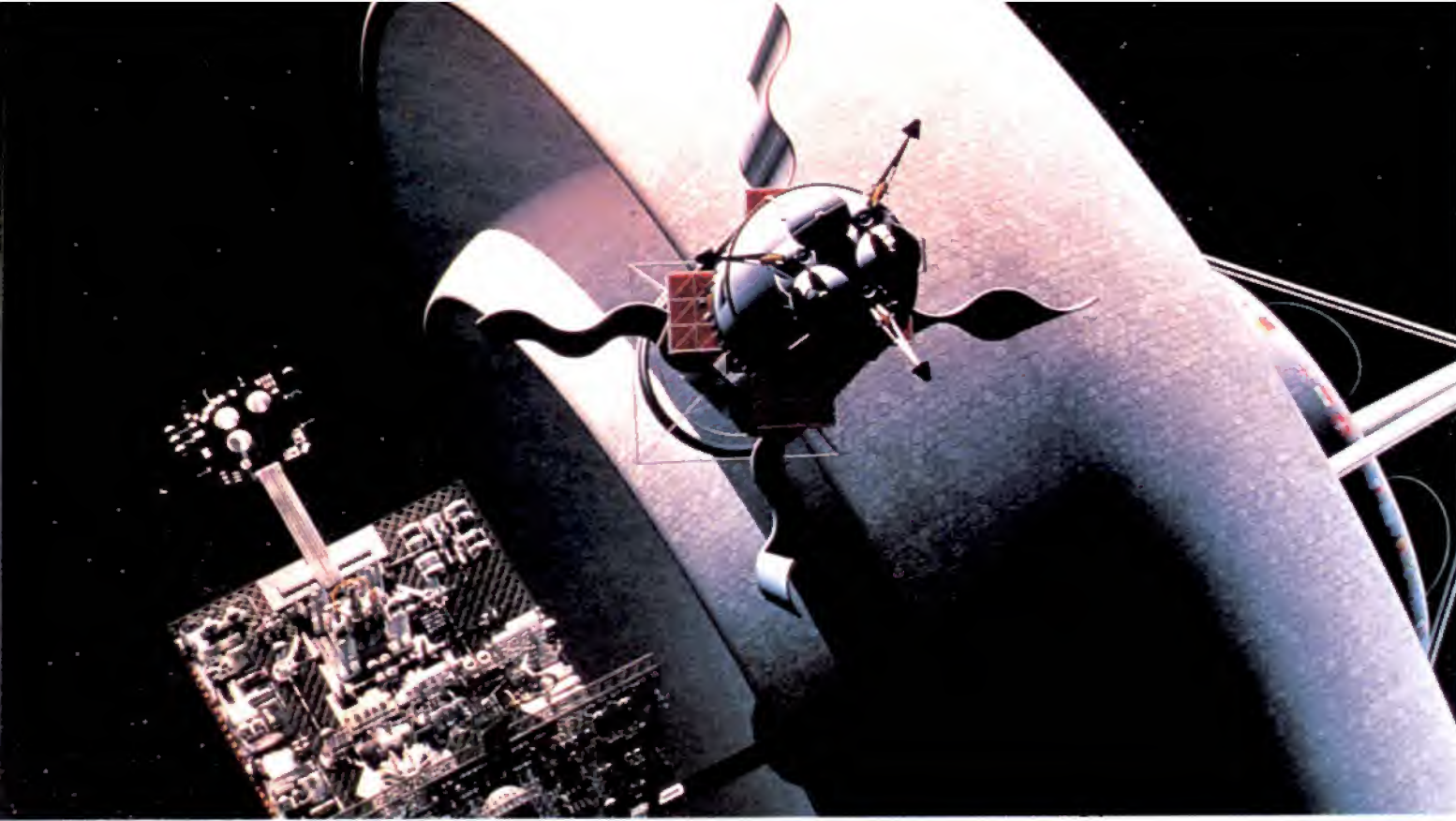
Imax takes

Captain Kirk may have taken us to hundreds of places where no man had gone before, but none of the *Enterprise's* voyages is likely to be undertaken in reality any time soon. The makers of *L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE*, on the other hand, have a different vision of space travel, though—a much more viable one.

The 3-D film, the newest in a spectacular line of IMAX features, takes movie-goers 100 years into the future to a city-sized space station called L5, which orbits the Earth. Named after an actual point in the moon's orbit, L5 is a port for star-bound explorers and a shining example of human ingenuity. Instead of phasers and warp drives, we see hydroponic gardens and farms where crops can grow year-round. Instead of Starfleet officers in itchy tunics, we get children, parents, and scientists in comfortable duds. Instead of heroes battling fierce alien warriors for the survival of the human race, the characters try to figure out a way to avoid running out of water when their supply starts to run low.

"I don't think science-fiction is the right word—it's science-future," said actor Colin Fox, one of the stars of *L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE*. "I think it's only looking a few years ahead, to where we're going to be. The whole feeling of it was moving away from *STAR TREK*."

A veteran Canadian actor, Fox plays the space station's senior scientist. This sage man of science also is the grandfather of the narrator and lead character, 7-year-old Chieko (played by Rachel Walker). Over the course of the 36-minute movie, an adult version of Chieko's voice (as if looking back on events we are witnessing) pro-



Top: A spaceship launches from L5, on a mission to intercept a comet. Above: A mirror reflects light to the city in space, without the sun's harmful rays. Bottom: Chieko (Rachel Walker) "visits" with her friends on Earth via a hologram.



CITY IN SPACE

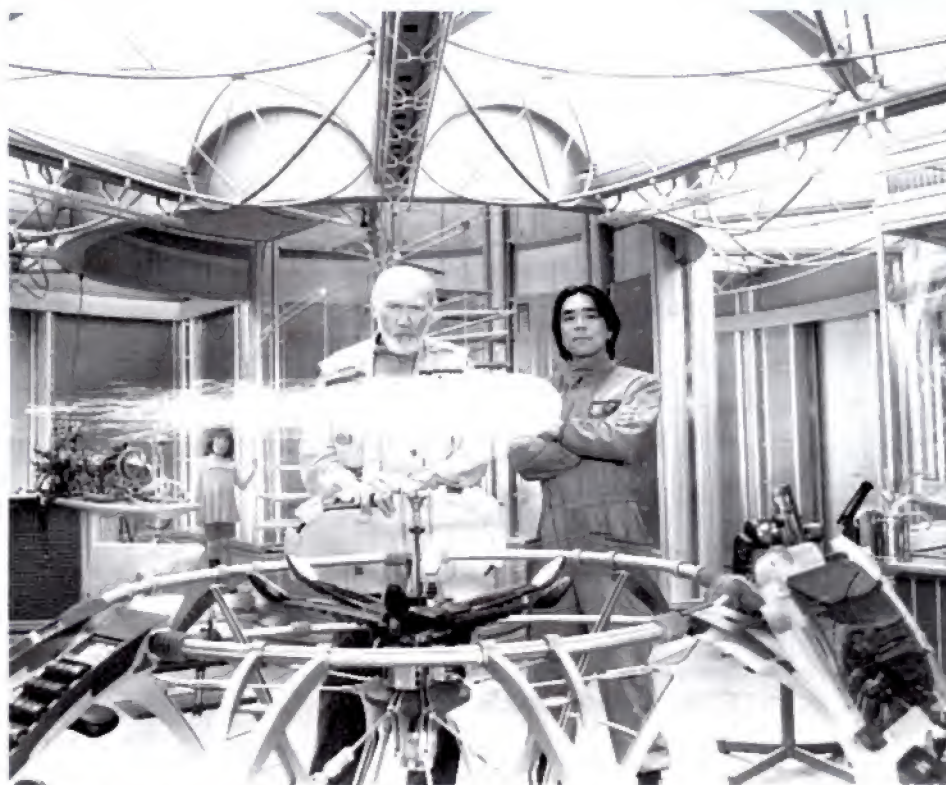
you where no one has gone before—in 3-D.

vides a voice-over narration about how L5 came to be and what it means to live in an off-world artificial environment with 10,000 people. Her story includes a history of the space program up to that point in time, mixing real-life facts and footage—including bits about the space shuttle and the Viking program—with events that haven't occurred yet but probably will, like a probe landing on Enceladus, one of the moons of Saturn. The blend of fact and fiction gives the narration an almost documentary feel.

"We went to great lengths to ensure that it was all based in the realm of the possible," said Toni Myers, a longtime IMAX filmmaker whose responsibilities with L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE included writing and producing the picture. "We wanted to look within the realizable future, as opposed to STAR TREK, which is millennia away and purely the future of imagination. We wanted to create a story that people would consider for the future."

With all fairness to Myers, however, it is probably not the story that is putting people in the seats for L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE—it's the awesome spectacle of the IMAX 3-D technology and the computer-generated imagery the movie utilizes at every turn. Every frame of film is dazzling, from the opening shot of young Chieko and her pet parrot in a lush, colorful, tropical garden on L5 to an amazing low-level flyover of the surface of Mars.

That high-speed shot is one of the best in the film, using the amazing 3-D effect and the CGI to their fullest. As the camera sweeps over the planet—specifically, a part of the Valles Marineris, a huge valley the width of the United States where



L5's senior scientist (Collin Fox) and engineer (Dennis Akiyama) watch a holographic image of a comet, which they hope to mine as a water supply.

future spacecraft will be able to land—you actually feel like you're along for the ride. Even Myers can't help enjoying the sequence, despite the fact that she helped make it and knows it's only movie magic. "I get as big a kick out of the Mars flyover as anyone else," she said gleefully.

For those unfamiliar with IMAX, here's a quick primer. The movie screen is six stories high, just about the largest in the world, and the audience's chairs are laid out at a sharp vertical angle, from the bottom of the screen to its top, as opposed to the horizontal, ground-level setup at traditional movie theaters. The screen itself has up to 12,000 resolution points across its width, whereas a television screen has only 525. The format's image size is the largest in motion picture history—10 times the size of standard 35mm and three times the size of standard 70mm film.

(Imax actually utilizes 70mm film: the additional size is achieved by running the film through the camera and projector sideways, rather than vertically.) In addition, an IMAX theater also is equipped with a digital surround-sound system.

As a result, the movie is very much in your face, even more so since L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE is in 3-D. To capture the 3-D effect, viewers wear lightweight headsets with polarized lenses that resemble futuristic snorkel masks. These headsets are far more technologically advanced than the cheap cardboard glasses with the red-and-green lenses normally associated with 3-D films—they're also equipped with tiny speakers that create personal surround-sound systems for each viewer.

The overall result is an experience that can't be equaled in a standard movie theater. "It's im-

mense," said Myers, who also has worked on several other space-themed films for the company as a member of the IMAX Space Team. "It has wonderful, immersive qualities, whether it's in 2-D or 3-D. The quality of the image is beyond compare."

One of the best visual tricks of the film is that the camera is almost always in motion, slowly panning across a science lab where people are hard at work or moving with Chieko as she feeds the animals in the farm aboard L5. The constant action strengthens the 3-D images and further plunges the audience into Chieko's world.

"That's how 3-D works," said Myers, who also served as the project's supervising director. "It's not shoving spears at people. It's that motion that always gives you relationships with different planes. It's very, very, neat technology."

Another great sequence is the first-ever IMAX 3-D footage of the space shuttle. No CGI are needed for this shot, in which the audience is treated to a shot of the launch itself. Between the amazing sight of smoke and fire pouring out of the shuttle rockets and the extraordinary sound of the blastoff, it almost seems as if you are standing on the launch pad with the great ship.

Fox said making L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE, his first 3-D movie and his first IMAX film, was a bit unnerving at times, mostly due to the technology associated with the mediums.

"The camera is the size of a side-by-side refrigerator—it's huge!" said the 57-year-old actor, who also appears in Sylvester Stallone's DAYLIGHT and the syndicated television show PSI FACTOR. "It's immense, because there are actually two cameras looking at you at the same

BY RUSSELL LISSAU

time, with one lens in between so you can see what you're doing."

Another potential distraction was the large amount of noise the camera made while operating. The camera was so loud that it overwhelmed the actors' lines, forcing Fox and his co-stars to re-record their dialogue after their scenes were shot.

"It's quite the machine," joked Fox, who got over his fear of the giant camera by talking with its operator. "It's awesome at first, but fortunately the IMAX crew is so marvelous that they made it all seem perfectly normal, and you forget about it after a while."

Fox also was quite aware that audiences would be seeing his mug on a six-story-tall screen. "I tried not to think about it," he said. "Every once in a while I'd think about that 60-foot movie screen. With one flutter of the eye, you could look bizarre. It's like dealing with a huge but delicate monster. But I really felt like I was a pioneer—not many actors have gone through this process."

When Myers and her cohorts at IMAX began working on *L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE* a few years ago, it was supposed to be a 15-minute film for an expo in Tokyo. But when that expo was canceled, they decided to expand on the project and make it for a wider audience. Altogether, Myers and her crew spent about 18 months making the film, and its budget falls in line with the other IMAX 3-D films, she said.

A highlight for Myers was seeing how well the CGI and acting came together, such as in the scenes where the *L5* scientists are studying their holographic workstations. "We had a terrific team on the film, the CGI guys and the live-action people," Myers said.

Although parts of the movie are pure speculative fiction—for example, the scene in which Chieko walks into a virtual world not unlike a *STAR TREK* holodeck to play with friends who live back on Earth—most of the film is based in reality or in scientific possibility. The filmmakers worked with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratories in California to create the aforementioned low-level zoom over the Martian landscape, a scene based on data garnered

"We wanted to ensure that it was within the realm of the possible," said Toni Myers, "as opposed to *STAR TREK*, which is pure imagination."



Chieko (Rachel Walker), through whom the audience sees the wonders of living on *L5*, pets her bird amidst the artificially maintained garden.

during the Viking probe's visit to the red planet, as well as a shot of the 1995 collision of Comet Shoemaker-Levy with Jupiter. They also went to NASA to determine where to place the space station itself. The answer was at LaGrange Point 5—where the gravitational pull is close to zero, a factor that would create few problems for the station and would allow approaching spaceships to dock with fewer hassles.

But science aside, it's the CGI that is most impressive. Among the computer-generated images are: the blueprints of *L5*, which the viewer flies through on a narrated tour; shots of the finished city in space; the scenes on Mars and Enceladus; and the many shots of an approaching comet. The comet, filled with ice at its core, is central to the film's story—if the scientists can harness it, they will have an unlimited supply of water. Through CGI, we get to see one of these beautiful stellar bodies up close, as well as what it might be like to land on a comet.

And let's not forget the space station itself. Based on the work of a group of scientists

and futurists who have studied space-colony possibilities, *L5* was designed by Pat Rawlings, an artist and aerospace designer who has worked with NASA for more than 17 years. The specifications for the fictitious satellite are impressive. The wheel-shaped city is more than one-mile in diameter. To simulate Earth's gravity, it rotates once per minute around a central hub. In an effort to prevent radiation from seeping into the city, 10 million tons of lunar rock were brought in to use as a shield around the structure. Additionally, the station contains a single-fusion power plant, spacious living and agricultural spaces, and a zero-gravity docking center.

Still, none of those specs would mean anything to the viewer if it weren't for the wondrous special effects that give *L5* such amazing detail. Rawlings, who also designed other spacecraft for the film, created a space station that structurally resembles the one in *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (it is a logical design, after all) but reveals details all its own. Realized with the IMAX 3-D effects, *L5*

is at least as amazingly impressive in its own right.

All of the live-action filming was done in Toronto, but several companies across the world helped create the CGI for *L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE*. Ex-Machina, an award-winning French company based in Paris and Tokyo, designed many of the shots of *L5* itself, as well as the station's solar array, the holographic images that float above the scientists' work stations, and several spacecraft. Digital Media Group, a department of Fujitsu Limited of Tokyo, produced the scene of the robot probe exploring Enceladus. Chieko's adventure in virtual reality with her friends—in which they play hide-and-seek inside a life-sized snow globe—was created by the Computer Film Company in London. And in addition to their already-mentioned assistance, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratories gave the filmmakers images of Earth collected by the space probe Galileo when it visited Venus and Jupiter. Those images are combined with satellite pictures to show what Earth's cities look like at night as seen from space. Other members of the *L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE* crew hailed from Scotland, China, and Belgium.

In that regard, the IMAX team mirrored the multinational makeup of the space station itself. "It was truly an international effort for the CGI," said Myers, who is already at work on another IMAX movie about space, a documentary tentatively titled *MISSION TO MIR*. "It was completely around the world."

Myers said the response to *L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE* has been terrific. Audience members have liked the use of a female protagonist, and Chieko's mixed heritage—her mother is Caucasian, her father is Asian—also gets positive feedback. Of course, the biggest praise—especially from the youth market that Myers was trying to target with the film—has been for the 3-D effects.

"It's great to stand at the door and hear 'Awesome!' and 'It was better than *INDEPENDENCE DAY*,'" Myers said. "That is the most gratifying

continued on page 62

FILM RATINGS

- Must see
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Fodder for MST-3K

BAD MOON

Director-writer: Eric Red. Warner-Morgan Creek, 11/96. 91 mins. R. With: Mariel Hemingway, Michael Pare.

BAD MOON is the third directing effort from Eric Red, who previously co-wrote the splendid vampire saga NEAR DARK (with director Kathryn Bigelow). It is all the more disappointing, therefore, that BAD MOON is so mediocre.

The story is simple: man is bitten by werewolf; man turns into werewolf; man tries to stop himself from killing his loved ones; man-werewolf is inevitably destroyed. Unfortunately, motivations are, at best, confusing. When Ted (Pare), who may or may not be some kind of scientist, returns from an ill-fated trip to the Amazon, he tells no one of his horrid experience there: he was bitten by a beast that mauled his girlfriend to death. Why does he accept an invitation to live with his sister, Janet (Hemingway), when he knows that he is a werewolf whose close proximity puts her and her son, Brett, in danger? There is a reference made, when she finds his diary, that he hopes "love of family" will save him from his terrible fate, yet he never explains why he believes this is possible or what he will do if it doesn't.

Ted is distraught over his predicament. Why he then turns irredeemably evil about two-thirds through is puzzling. Will this make us more accepting of his demise? He is much more captivating as a tormented soul, chaining himself to a tree at night so that he can't do any harm.

The story takes a positive turn when the werewolf breaks into Janet's

BAD MOON: Michael Pare knows that his lycanthropy puts his sister and nephew in danger, so why does he move in with them?



CINEMA

By Steve Biodrowski

WHERE WE'VE GONE BEFORE

When is a movie not a "real movie"?

In *Cinefantastique* 28:6, actor Brent Spiner complained, not without some justification, that the STAR TREK films are not regarded as "real movies." The features, he said, "are not reviewed as [to] whether they're good or bad films, as much as 'Was it better than the last one?'...They're compared to each other, as opposed to the rest of the films out there."

This is of course true—not only of the STAR TREK films but of others as well: James Bond movies, horror movies (especially if they're part of a series), etc. The critical assumption in all cases is that the films are targeted at a specific audience, and normal aesthetic criteria do not apply, as long as that audience is satisfied. This is prejudicial (not to mention condescending), but it has both disadvantages and advantages for the films under scrutiny. For instance, a critic who doesn't understand a genre, or even dislikes it outright, might give a begrudgingly favorable review if he believes the film has hit the bull's-eye in terms of its intended demographic. (How else to explain the oft-repeated refrain, heard in endless variations, of "Fans are sure to be pleased?")

However, not to put all the blame on the critics, there is some justification to their attitude. Filmmakers constantly resort to an established formula to bring back an established audience, as opposed to developing a film organically and logically from its premise. (One good "bad" example is 1989's LICENSE TO KILL, in which a good premise about James Bond's personal vendetta against the villain is buried beneath the de rigueur car chases and stunts.) The result is films that can be considered as separate from "real movies." In a "real" movie, a character might have more brains than to walk around unprotected in the dark where the monster can eat him; explosions and car crashes would not necessarily intrude at random points to punch up an otherwise lagging narrative; old plot points would not be endlessly recycled in order to provide fan-pleasing continuity with a defunct TV series.

Let's face it: the closest STAR TREK ever got to making "real movies" was with Parts 1 and 6 (whatever their relative merits). All the other "Classic Cast" features



The crew of the Enterprise hunt Borg in the new feature—an example of recycling popular elements from the show for the benefit of Trekkies.

have been attempts "to get back to the spirit of the TV show," and GENERATIONS was simply a contrived and hardly satisfying effort at pleasing two generations of fans by putting the two TV captains together. Even worse, much of the film depended on audience familiarity with Picard's family history from the show. For all that the basic STAR TREK premise is "to go where no man/one has gone before," the films have pretty much stuck to taking us only where we've been before—on the small screen.

FIRST CONTACT continues this approach by bringing back the Borg and exploring a piece of TREK history vaguely referenced in the original series. Okay, the Borg make an effective threat, worthy of the big screen, and they are probably well-enough established by this point that one need not be familiar with the show to appreciate them. But the inclusion of Zephram Cochrane is the usual sort of fan sop that has plagued the films: "Hey, let's take a gap from the original series and fill it in!" In other words, "Regular viewers,

stay away; this one's for Trekkies!"

If the filmmakers will not bother to develop a film that can stand on its own, then they can hardly expect it to be evaluated strictly on its own merits as a film. It is, ultimately, just another entry in a series that started on TV and moved into theatres. So, was it "better than the last one?"

Absolutely! With a stronger script by Ronald Moore and Brannon Braga, and deft direction by Jonathan Frakes, this ranks among the best TREKS yet. The conflict with the Borg creates some intense excitement and even some moving drama regarding Picard (Patrick Stewart)'s Ahab-like quest to destroy his enemy.

Unfortunately, with the usual misplaced NEXT GENERATION zeal, the script takes aim at something from Classic TREK in order to denigrate it: in this case, Cochrane is turned from a revered scientist into a self-interested entrepreneur; but don't worry, a little exposure to the ST:TNG cast converts him into a hero. Hey, there is a certain fun in iconoclasm, but it's mitigated when you simply replace the old icons with their immediate descendants. Maybe it's about time for Rick Berman, Ron Moore, and Brannon Braga to turn their jaundiced eyes on their own creations, instead of continuing to nit-pick at the original. □

BIBLIOFILE

By Mike Lyons

STAR WARS: From Concept to Screen to Collectible

When STAR WARS premiered on May 25, 1977, no one was prepared for the lines that formed at theatres and the way it crept into everyone's consciousness. *STAR WARS: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* by Stephen Sansweet, takes a closer look at how the film was developed and how it and subsequent sequels have had an impact around the world.

This phenomenon seems to have resurfaced, thanks to the hype surrounding the original film's 20th Anniversary re-release. Not too long ago, however, Luke and company almost became extinct. "STAR WARS, around '86-'87, almost disappeared," said Sansweet. "It came back in 1990-91, with the first of a series of STAR WARS novels by Timothy Zahn, and that sort of re-ignited it. It was a slow burn at first; then it became a supernova."

In his book, Sansweet details how this "supernova" began with a glimmer of an idea in George Lucas' mind. Readers are shown some of artist Ralph McQuarrie's original concept drawings, models used by the effects department, and humorous behind-the-scenes trivia (e.g., the crew originally dubbed the Millennium Falcon the "flying hamburger").

Sansweet also reveals that tie-ins were on Lucas' mind as early as the script stage. "As he was writing, he really wasn't thinking about merchandise very much," said Sansweet. "But, at that time, the mugs with faces of different dog breeds were very popular, and he loved his dog, Indiana, and thought it would be cool to have a mug with Chewbacca on it." Once the film's merchandising blitz began, there was indeed a Chewbacca mug on the market, and it remains one of Lucas' favorite pieces of merchandise to this day.

In a chapter entitled "Prophetic and Toyetic," Sansweet delves into how exactly the STAR WARS merchandising began. "There were some things available as early as 1976," he said. "Probably the very first product that's a collectible was a poster that was done by what was then called the 'STAR WARS Corporation.' This was the poster that was sold at conventions and at comic book shows, in order to stir interest, and they wanted to at least get their money back on



Author Stephen Sansweet traces the development and impact of the STAR WARS saga, from inspiration to merchandising, in his new book.

the sale of the posters. They sold them for a buck apiece, and today these posters are probably going for about four hundred bucks."

The book also notes that one of the reasons behind the enduring collectibility of STAR WARS is Lucas' involvement in the film's merchandising. "At the very beginning, he was personally involved, and then things sort of got overwhelming and he had to get back, almost immediately, for pre-production on *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*," said the author. "So he charged the people who worked for him with a very high level of 'Make sure you don't put out anything that embarrasses or cheapens the license.' So they went out of their way to make sure that schlock stuff was excluded."

This philosophy only increased the quality of the myriad STAR WARS merchandise that was circulated from 1977 through 1983, during the tenure of the three films. The products included not only action figures and play sets but also record albums, T-Shirts, posters, banks, books, trading cards, and more. If there was a product that the public would buy, chances are the words STAR WARS appeared on it.

Through the years, there have been many wrinkles thrown in.

Sansweet's book also reveals the more popular products weren't even available in America: an R2-D2 radio, used as a Coca-Cola tie-in, was available only in Korea; and Japan was the only place where wood model kits of the various spaceships can be found. As if this weren't enough, before the title change to *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, some products were manufactured with the *REVENGE OF THE JEDI* logo; these, of course, are as prized as the Lost Ark.

"Right now, the hottest area for collectors is the small action figures," said Sansweet. "Some of those now are topping five and six hundred dollars. In fact, at an auction, an early figure, a Jawa with a vinyl cape, which is the way it was first issued, went for twelve hundred dollars. This is something that sold new for less than three bucks—that's a pretty good return."

Sansweet should know, as he boasts one of the largest and most complete collections of STAR WARS memorabilia. He adds that the reason for STAR WARS continued popularity is simple: "We're not talking *War and Peace* here, but we *are* talking about something that, at the time, was the tops—the thing that everybody talked about in the school yard—and people want to re-create that." □

house. There is something much more frightening about a beast in your house rather than out in the wood where it belongs. The destruction of domestic bliss is scary.

The small group of three actors feels neglected. Their dialogue is stiff and false, and they invoke little compassion or interest in their fates. The script is based on the novel *Thor*, so in some way, it makes perfect sense that the best performance comes from the real hero, the Sherman Shepherd named Thor, who is the fierce protector and ultimate savior of Janet and Brett.

The effects are uneven: the well-rendered face of the werewolf is familiar yet not; the body of the beast, however, looks and *moves* like what it is, a man in a suit. The blood and gore are superb, especially in Ted's final transformation, and the animation of the man-into-werewolf sequences is also worth watching.

● ● Sonya Burres

LOVER'S KNOT

Director-writer: Pete Shaner. Cabin Fever-Legacy, 7/96. 86 mins. R. With: Bill Campbell, Jennifer Grey, Tim Curry.

In an age when nothing is left to the viewer's imagination except a bit of wet lace (if that), it's nice to find a well-meaning romantic fantasy (or any kind of romance for that matter)—performed with panache and directed with some skill—that simply leaves you feeling good.

LOVER'S KNOT is a good little film with a plot that is old-fashioned fluff: one of Cupid's caseworkers (Curry) is sent to unite (Steve (Campbell) and Megan (Grey), whose souls have lost each other throughout time. Now, says the Big Guy, is their last chance: if they don't make a go of it, it's a no-go for eternity.

One can almost picture Cary Grant either as either Cupid's caseworker or the hapless romantic Steve (parts he played with equal skill), wooing Irene Dunne or Katherine Hepburn in glorious black-and-white. What we have here is a cast just as appealing: Campbell is as charming as ever; Grey is sexier with just a smile than any low-budget-movie femmes in their wet G-strings could ever hope to be; and Curry is simply damn good in whatever he does. The characters talk directly to the viewer, with occasional asides from Steve's former girlfriends, his mother, Megan's ex-boyfriend (Adam Baldwin), as well as Shakespeare, "legendary" director Alan Smithee (Harold Gould), and Dr. Joyce Brothers. Everyone is enjoyable in what amounts to a TV-movie done with care, good wishes, and a promise of the One True Love for everyone watching.

LOVER'S KNOT screams "Date Movie!" and doesn't try to be anything more than that. Charming, sweet, and witty, writer-director Pete Shaner's movie entertains, and would make any viewing couple snuggle up with comfortable satisfaction.

● ● 1/2 Fred Szebin

Too much fun not to be liked.

SPACE JAM

A Warner Bros. release of an Ivan Reitman/David Falk/Ken Ross production. Produced by Reitman, Joe Medjuck, Daniel Goldberg. Executive producers: David Falk Ken Rose. Director: Joe Pytko. Cinematographer: Michael Chapman. Editor: Sheldon Kahn. Production designer: Geoffrey Kirkland. Art director: David Klassen. Special visual effects & animation: Cinesite. Live action/animation visual effects: Ed Jones. Directors of Animation: Bruce W. Smith, Tony Cervone. Sound James Larue, Gene Cantamessa. Screenplay by Leo Beavenuti, Steve Rudnick, Timothy Harris, Herschel Weingrod. 11/96, 87 mins, PG.

Michael Jordan.....Himself
 Stan Podolak.....Wayne Knight
 Juanita.....Theresa Rondle
 Character Voices:
 Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd.....Billy West
 Daffy Duck, Tasmanian Devil, Bull,
 Doc Bradley Baker Swackhammer.....Danny DeVito
 Bert, Herbie Marvin the Martian,
 Porky Pig, Tweety.....Bob Bergen
 Sylvester, Yosemite Sam,
 Foghorn Leghorn.....Bill Farmer
 Granny.....June Foray
 Pepe LePew.....Maurice LaMarche
 Foghorn Leghorn.....Bill Farmer
 Lola Bunny.....Kath Seucie

by Mike Lyons

The Walt Disney Studio was once called "the Tiffany's of animation." If that's the case, then the current Warner Bros. animation studio is the "shopping mall of animation," and within that mall is one big, boisterous, color-splattered, ear-splitting store called SPACE JAM. The movie is as much a product as the barrage of Happy Meals, plush toys, and action figures that came along with it. The Michael Jordan-Looney Tunes basketball face-off against space aliens seems to have been made purely as an exercise in fun, and that's why it succeeds.

While entertaining, SPACE JAM manages to serve as a double tribute—to the Chicago Bull's greatest hoop icon and to Warner Bros.' greatest toon icons. After opening with a "re-enactment" from Jordan's childhood, the film's credits serve as a montage of Jordan's career, and the entire film goes on to become, essentially, a love letter to his "Air-ness" (as he is called in the film).

The other half of the film salutes the classic Warner Bros. cartoon shorts and characters. Everyone from Bugs Bunny to the goofy orange monster Gossamer has been recreated lovingly by animation directors Tony Cervone, Bruce Smith, and art director Bill Perkins. Not only do they look like their classic personae, but their personalities are perfectly in sync with what audiences have come to expect from them. The added benefit of SPACE JAM is that multiple Looney Tunes share the screen



Above: Bugs convinces Michael Jordan that the Toons needs assistance. Below: new cartoon character Lola Bunny.

at the same time, allowing each personality to bounce off the other, thus making all the characters seem like a slightly askew repertory company. The villainous Nerd-luck-Monstar aliens that the Toons go up against are hilarious visuals. Starting off like deflated Smurfs, they morph into a Saturday morning cartoon on steroids.

The animated world the characters inhabit is probably the slickest ever put on screen. Tweaked by computer imagery, spectacular visual effects, and the almost constantly moving camera of director Joe Pytko, the animated characters seem to inhabit a three-dimensional world that at times is so whirlingly fast that you don't have time to wonder how they did it.

Jordan himself also has a great deal to do with convincing the audience of this world. He brings the same nonchalance to acting alongside animation that Bob Hoskins employed in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT. The end result is an understated, modest performance that wins over the audience. In addition, Jordan's NBA peers (Barkley, Bouges, Ewing, Johnson, and Bradley) get many of the funniest scenes in the film's live-action moments and seem to have



had a hell of a good time poking fun at themselves.

SPACE JAM'S only flaw is in its story. For all the great one-liners and slapstick moments, there are scenes that seem somewhat sloppy in execution or end without any payoff. There are others in which the filmmakers almost seem to be poking us in the ribs, reminding us of the gimmick of the film.

Still, SPACE JAM is filled with plenty of "gotta tell my friends about it" moments: Jordan being rolled into a ball by the

Monstars and thrown around the court; Bugs and Daffy complaining that they never see a dime from the merchandising of their likenesses; Tweety employing martial arts on the court; Bill Murray's extended cameo, which gives the impression that every word out of his mouth was ad-libbed; and Elmer Fudd and Yosemite Sam raising Lugers in a hysterical PULP FICTION send up.

All of this, and much more, makes SPACE JAM too much fun not to be liked. □

ART HOUSE

By David J. Skal

SAN SEBASTIAN FILM FESTIVAL *Running rings around Hollywood*

The 44th annual San Sebastian Film Festival, held September 19-28 in San Sebastian, Spain, was highlighted by the most complete Tod Browning retrospective ever mounted. A total of 30 films spotlighting Browning as both a director and, early in his career, a silent comedian, was the latest of San Sebastian's annual tributes to significant filmmakers. (James Whale was similarly honored in 1989.)

In addition to familiar films like *DRACULA* (1931) and 1932's *FREAKS* (presented in an exceptionally beautiful, subtitled print owned by Filmoteca Espanola) and the entire Browning-Chaney canon (with the exception, of course, of the ever-elusive *LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT* [1925]), there were some recently rediscovered rarities, notably the *NO WOMAN KNOWS* and *DRIFTING*, directed by Browning for Universal in 1921 and 1923, respectively.

This writer, along with co-author Elias Savada, was honored to attend the Festival for the Spanish publication of our Browning biography *Dark Carnival* [excerpted in *CFQ* 27:3], elaborately produced by the Festival and Filmoteca, with over 100 more photos than appear in the American edition. The keen interest of European journalists and audiences in Browning's work was quite gratifying but not surprising, given the high estimation Browning and Chaney have enjoyed on the other side of the Atlantic since the French surrealists discovered films like *THE UNKNOWN* and *WEST*



Tod Browning biographers David Skal (left) and Elias Savada (right) at the 44th annual San Sebastian Film Festival's tribute to the work of the late director.

OF ZANZIBAR in the 1920s.

Besides Browning, there was much programming of interest to fantastic cinephiles—more, in fact, than one person could possibly take in. The Festival's "Lumiere" series (dedicated to restoration projects) showcased stunning new prints of *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*, *THE GOLEM*, and *FAUST*. A second program, "The Red Nightmare," included 1950s paranoia from Spain and America, including *RED PLANET MARS* and *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*.

Among the new films screened was Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou's *MICROCOSMOS*, with super-magnification photography of the insect world that is arguably more awe-inspiring than anything yet produced by Industrial Light and Magic. But perhaps the most ambitious and interesting Festival entry was *MOEBIUS*, a feature-length science-fiction drama produced collectively by advanced film students at the Universidad del Cine, Buenos Aires. When unaccountable "ghost trains" begin appearing in the labyrinthine Buenos Aires subway system, a mathematically minded surveyor (Guillermo Angeletti) uncovers the audacious reason: the sheer complexity of the railway has reached a kind of critical mass, punching a hole in the time-space continuum and transforming the subway into an extra-dimensional moebius strip. A highly cerebral but highly satisfying exercise, *MOEBIUS* takes risks that most commercial filmmakers can barely comprehend, much less aspire to. It's heartening to see the work of upward-coming students whose combination of brains and craft already run rings (or are they moebius strips?) around the usual Hollywood wannabes. □

ALL OF THEM WITCHES

Director: Daniel Gruener. Reviewed at the Toronto Int'l Film Festival, 9/96. 100 mins. unrated. With: Susana Zabaleta, Alejandro Tommasi, Delia Casanova.

ALL OF THEM WITCHES (Mexican title: *SOBRENATURAL*) is a boring, pretentious, intolerable film, which deludes the viewer into believing his/her patience will be rewarded, that it will eventually redeem itself for boring one to tears. Alas, it doesn't. It looks nice; it has elements which could have been intriguing, but in the end, it is a colossal waste of time.

It is the story of a young, child-like wife named Dolores. She becomes emotionally damaged after the death of her best friend, Eva. Her husband, Andres, is a fatherly, controlling figure who nearly keeps her a prisoner in their own house. Amongst Eva's possessions, Dolores finds strange books and a letter packaged with some white powder. She follows a lead to a witch's coven, where she learns that Eva and Andres had been cheating on her. The witch gives Dolores a spell to use on Andres, the same potion she had given Eva to use on Andres. She is devastated by this revelation but vows to win her husband back using the potion. The problem is that Dolores has already unknowingly come under the spell of the potion, and the two go at each other like animals. Dolores is happy to have her man back with a passion, but both soon learn that the potion is not without its side effects, and that Andres was involved with mobsters who engineered Eva's death.

Susana Zabaleta's beauty is not enough to carry the film. Director Gruener substitutes style for substance and moves the plot along at a snail's pace. By the time we have learned a key plot point, we no longer care. Despite its Mexican origins, the film has a distinctly European flavor, making it easy to ignore its shortcomings as the trappings of an artistic approach. Yet this is a facade. Gruener has nothing to say and nothing new to show us, so the final product is a definite

In archetypal fashion, two rubber-suited monsters face off in *GAMERA 2: ASSAULT OF THE LEGION*.



MICROCOSMOS' insect macrophotography transcends the documentary genre—a fantastic look into another world as alien as any science-fiction.



yawn. The subtitled dialogue is dull and without any of the intrigue one would ordinarily expect. The English title is from ROSEMARY'S BABY, a clip of which is shown in this film. Too bad Gruener didn't learn something from Polanski. By including the clip, he reminds us of just how inferior his film is.

● Paul Wardle

GAMERA II: ASSAULT OF THE LEGION

Director: Shusuke Kaneko. Reviewed at the Toronto International Film Festival, 9/96. 99 mins. Unrated. With: Toshiyuki Nagashima, Ayako Fujitani.

In the last few years, the increase in budgets and technology has given rubber-suited Japanese monsters new life. Gamera has been featured in two films recently; the second of these, ASSAULT OF THE LEGION, was generally well-received by the few who saw its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival.

After a meteor falls to Earth, giant armor-plated crab-like aliens attack a subway train and tear up the tunnel. Huge hive-like pods burst out of the ground, preparing to launch a seed into space to reproduce. While a lady scientist helps the army to understand the creatures, Gamera, having sensed that Earth has been invaded, destroys the pods. But the alien creatures swarm over him like bees, leaving the bleeding turtle to fly off and recover. The "queen," who is even larger than Gamera, gets into an epic battle with Earth's protector while the scientist works with her people to find a solution. With the help of a young woman (Steven Seagal's daughter, Ayako Fujitani) who can communicate with Gamera, the turtle is revived for the climactic battle with the Legion.

Director Kaneko manages to create more genuine suspense and entertainment than most recent horror films achieve. GAMERA 2 is a fast-paced, fun-filled movie that transcends its inadequacies and gives us something often sorely lacking these days: a good time.

● ● Paul Wardle

The second in the new GAMERA series transcends its genre to offer some genuine suspense and entertainment.



Stephen King and his fans deserve better.

THINNER

Spelling Films Presents a Richard Rubinstein production of a Tom Holland Film. Director: Tom Holland. Executive Producer: Stephen F. Kesten. Cinematographer: Kees Van Oostrum. Production Designer: Laurence Bennett. Special Makeup by: Greg Cannom. Costume Designer: Ha Nguyen. Music composed by: Daniel Licht. Screenplay by Michael McDowell and Tom Holland, based on the book by Stephen King. 10/96, 93 mins. Rated: R.

Robert John Burke.....	Billy Halleck
Lucinda Jenney.....	Heidi Halleck
Joy Lenz.....	Linda Halleck
Time Winters.....	Prosecutor
Howard Erskine.....	Judge Phillips
Terrence Garney.....	Balliff
Joe Mantegna.....	Richie Ginelli

by Patricia Moir

As a novelist, Stephen King offers a pretty good return on a reader's investment. Despite the fact that his work has varied in quality over the years, even his worst writing has been considerably better than most of the cliched dreck on the genre paperback racks. What sets King apart from the majority of contemporary horror writers is his consistent, unerring insight into the complexities of human nature; no matter how fantastic the scenario, his characters are as recognizable as our own neighbors. We suffer right along with his victims, and we even sympathize with his bad guys, who are really just ordinary folks who have taken a wrong turn somewhere and find themselves unable to negotiate their ways back to normality. King has created a cast of unforgettable villains out of society's real-life losers—teenage geeks, unsuccessful artists, lonely middle-aged women—and he has done it with so much compassion that his otherwise conventional melodramatic plots take on the stature of true tragedies. King's greatest gift is his understanding that evil is not chosen easily or, in most cases, even willingly, and that it can be truly attractive only to those so powerless or consumed with self-hatred that they have little left to lose.

Unfortunately, the many films which have been based on King's works have, for the most part, failed to capture any part of this insight. The author's carefully drawn relationships become viciously sadistic or hopelessly sentimental. Occasionally, as in MISERY or PET SEMATARY, we catch a sense of what has gone wrong in these people's lives, but more often than not King's rich, ambiguous characterizations are reduced to one-dimensional cartoon stereotypes.

Nowhere is this fatal flaw more



Billy Halleck (Robert John Burke) wastes away, courtesy of Greg Cannom's makeup effects, but the script fails to engender any sympathy for his plight.

evident than in the latest King adaptation, THINNER. The film bears only a superficial resemblance to King's novel of the same name (written under the pseudonym of Richard Bachman, the book is not, in any case, one of King's best outings). The story concerns Billy Halleck (Robert John Burke), an overweight, not-entirely-honest lawyer who accidentally kills a gypsy woman in a car accident and then weasels out of the consequences with the help of his friends at city hall. Outraged at this injustice, the woman's father (Michael Constantine) places a curse on Billy, causing him to lose several pounds a day until he is in danger of vanishing altogether.

The irony of all this, and even the hokiness of the old "gypsy curse" device, might have been amusing, were it not for the absolute incredibility of the major characters. Lempke, the old gypsy, is irredeemably nasty; we learn that he has been pointlessly cruel toward others (notably one man with a dying wife), making his motives in Billy's case appear a lot less justifiable. This should serve to make Billy more sympathetic, but it doesn't; he feels no remorse for his actions, and, when faced with his own imminent death, he is still so self-absorbed and acquisitive that he remains preoccupied with the (relatively speaking) lesser issue of whether his wife has slept with his doctor. Billy plunges into a reckless, vengeful fury against the gyp-

sies and his wife, aided by a mobster (Joe Mantegna) who owes him a favor for legal services rendered in the past. Billy's fluctuating concern for the gypsies doesn't stop him from exacting his revenge, and the fact that his actions ultimately destroy the one unquestionably pure and decent person in his life barely seems to phase him.

Why does a respectable, albeit morally ambivalent, citizen suddenly become capable of such atrocities? Well, if Billy were, deep down inside, a really insecure guy, if he knew that people laughed at his size, and that his wife found him unattractive, if he believed that clawing his way to the top of the corporate ladder by any means was the only way he could gain respect in a world which worships physical beauty, then all this might make some sense, and we might be able to feel some pity for him. Alas, there is no evidence of any such motives. Billy has friends, a lovely daughter, a wife who is clearly still devoted to him, and the respect of the entire community. In short, despite the amazingly life-like makeup and bodysuit which make Billy fat (this movie does have extraordinary effects), he's not really a fat man at heart, and without that plausible weakness, he is not a plausible protagonist.

Like every other character in this movie, everything Billy does is stupid or pointless—or both.

continued on page 61

THE BORDER

By Anthony Montesano

ON THE EDGE OF THE FANTASTIC

Mainstream films imbued with elements of the genre.

Thematically, the effect of *cinefantastique* is often felt in films which are primarily realistic in approach. With fantasy as old as storytelling itself, it is no wonder that elements of the supernatural are often seen in otherwise non-genre films. This column will examine just such films as these.

Two recent films muse on the nature of evil. *THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS* is not the first film to turn ordinary wildlife into monsters. Witness *MOBY DICK*, *JAWS*, *THE BEAST*, and *ARACHNOPHOBIA*. As written by William Goldman, *GHOST & DARKNESS* draws on the same primal fears as its predecessors and infuses in its monsters (in this case, two African male lions) the horrors of the world at large. The film derives its title from the names the local tribesmen ascribe to the lions, which they believe to be demonic spirits. The sense of foreboding continues to build as we learn that the area where the bridge is being built is called "Tsavo," the Swahili word for "place of slaughter."

An unofficial remake of *BWANA DEVIL* (1952), *GHOST & DARKNESS* takes place in an Africa where belief in myth and the supernatural is clashing with European codes of science and sensibility. Although tautly and effectively directed by Stephen Hop-



Michael Douglas (above) and Val Kilmer (inset) face a deadly pair of lions, viewed as demonic entities by the local populace, in *THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS*.

kins, the film, in both content and structure, is wholly derivative of *JAWS*. When the lions (which we are told are behaving in a decidedly un-lion-like fashion) begin to attack a camp of bridge builders, killing 130 people in two months, the tenuous group of workmen, with the exception of project leader John Patterson (Val Kilmer), want to abandon the effort (much like the beach-goers leaving the waters of Amity Island). As in *JAWS*, Patterson kills a lion early in the proceedings, which he believes was responsible for the slaughter, only to learn there is a much more powerful force at work. Into the

picture comes the great white hunter Charles Remington (Michael Douglas), a Captain Quinn-like character hired to kill the beasts. Nightmare visions and predatory adventure combine to create an effective thriller which may not fully succeed in its examination of natural evil but never fails to keep you watching.

In the other film, David Koepp's directorial debut, *THE TRIGGER EFFECT*, as in *GHOST & DARKNESS*, nothing supernatural ever happens. But it is clear that the *JURASSIC PARK* screenwriter has taken a page from William Golding's classic novel of civil and moral decay, *Lord of the Flies*, and strained it through Rod Serling's classic *TWILIGHT ZONE* episode "The Monsters Arrive on Maple Street" to create a modern-day parable about human tolerance, which never lives up to its early promise. (If there was any doubt about Koepp's influences, a close-up of street signs for Maple and Willoughby, references to two classic TZ episodes, lays it to rest. The spirit of Serling pervades the proceedings, but never quite has the impact it should.)

When a mysterious and seemingly worldwide power failure occurs in civil small town America, the residents become unglued. No one seems to know (and it's never explained) how the power failure began. "Haven't you heard?" jokes

Joe (Dermot Mulroney). "The Martians have landed, and they want our women."

The apocalyptic vision is never fully realized. Is Koepp arguing that we as a culture have become so dependent on electronics that without them we become primitive? When Serling asked the question it



was within the context of the Communist Red Scare (when aliens equaled Russians). When Golding asked the question it was in response to the rigidity of the English class system. But what does Koepp hope to add to the mix? Is it a question of race? Is it a treatise on Los Angeles in the '90s? We're never quite sure.

As the couple tossed in the middle of this chaos, Elisabeth Shue and Kyle MacLachlan (who battled his own demons in *BLUE VELVET* and *TWIN PEAKS*) provide the right chemistry, even if their characters are never fully realized and their transformation into primitives seems forced and perfunctory. Also, if you look quickly, you'll see a cameo by Andrew Kevin Walker, the creator of *SEVEN*, a film which explored similar themes with far greater impact.

* * *

TO GILLIAN ON HER 37TH BIRTHDAY poses an intriguing question: What truly constitutes a ghost? Although marketed by Triumph Releasing as a feel-good romantic drama-comedy and unfairly compared to *GHOST* by many critics, *GILLIAN* is truly neither. Rather, it is a gentle and somewhat cerebral riff on the question of spirit, body, and mind. Where does one end and the next begin?

At the center of the story is this question: Does David Lewis (played superbly by Peter Gal-

With a mysterious power outage disrupting society, *THE TRIGGER EFFECT* intentionally emulates Rod Serling's "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street."



RESTORATION

By David Skal

VERTIGO

Hitchcock's masterwork, obscured.

lagger) really meet with his dead wife Gillian (Michelle Pfeiffer) on the beaches of Nantucket, or is it all in his mind? And more importantly, what constitutes reality? After all, Christ's appearances following the resurrection were only to a select few; the Virgin Mary's appearances in Fatima, although believed by many, were to three children alone. Were these appearances (and similar religious visions throughout the centuries) simply brought on by wish fulfillment, or were they real? It all hinges on the concept of reality.

These larger issues are hinted at in *GILLIAN* but never fully explored. Traditional ghost stories, like *POLTERGEIST* and *CASPER*, do not rely on the consciousness or faith of the living to materialize the dead. As told by *PICKET FENCES* creator and Pfeiffer's husband David E. Kelley, this adaptation of Michael Brady's play strives for and achieves a deeper communion between the living and the dead.

Aside from a suicide attempt shortly after Gillian's death, David is relatively stable. He still has the capacity to joke with his brother-in-law Paul (the humorous Bruce Altman) and to be a concerned father to his daughter Rachel (the charming Claire Danes). By his own admission, however, David feels better when he talks with Gillian; when his grief pulls his life out of balance, her specter on the beach brings him back.

David's sister-in-law Esther (Kathy Baker) believes he is slowly going insane and dragging

continued on page 61

TO GILLIAN ON HER 37TH BIRTHDAY: Peter Gallagher plays David, who sees his wife two years after her death.



Opening in Times Square on the same day in 1958 as Terence Fisher's *HORROR OF DRACULA*, Alfred Hitchcock's *VERTIGO* initially was no match for the Hammer horror classic. The hot-blooded excesses of Christopher Lee catapulted the film into the box office hall of fame; *HORROR* has been reported to have had the most profitable cost-to-revenue ratio of any film ever produced in Great Britain. The stylish *sang-froid* of *VERTIGO*, by contrast, left late '50s audiences and critics decidedly cool. *VERTIGO*'s reputation as a masterwork built slowly, fueled in part by its long period of inaccessibility—Hitchcock himself, stung by the public's failure to warm to his highly personal, psychologically revealing film, withdrew it from circulation for years. Unseen films, of course, often enjoy enhanced reputations, sometimes deserved and sometimes not. *VERTIGO* has always been a more problematic film than its partisans are willing to allow, and repeated viewings magnify both its strengths and its flaws.

VERTIGO at first unfolds as an old-fashioned ghost story; but, in the grand tradition of the silent-era spookers, the haunting is ultimately revealed to be part of an elaborate murder plot. Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) is a San Francisco police officer forced into early retirement by an incapacitating fear of heights, the result of a fellow cop's fatal plunge while trying to aid him during a rooftop pursuit of a suspect. Scottie is hired as a private investigator by Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore), who believes his wife Madeleine (Kim Novak) may be possessed by the spirit of a dead ancestor. Stewart follows—and falls for—the cool, enigmatic, and ultimately suicidal blonde. After enduring a breakdown and long recuperation, he meets a young woman, Judy Barton (also played by Novak) who bears such a startling resemblance to the dead Madeleine that he sets about making her as a perfect double for the woman he lost. In the process he discovers the truth of the situation and his own unwitting role in Madeleine Elster's murder. At this point the plot becomes preposterously hokey—the audience is asked to believe that



Above: James Stewart and Kim Novak in *VERTIGO* (1958), victim of a recent "restoration." Inset: Alfred Hitchcock directs Novak in the film.



the ruthless, calculating murderer jeopardizes a perfect crime by actually allowing his accomplice to live—but Hitchcock carries off the conceit with a series of bravura set pieces, haunting performances by Stewart and Novak, and the best Bernard Hermann score ever.

The recent million-dollar, 70-millimeter restoration of the film (by Robert Harris and James C. Katz) is on many levels a technical marvel, not to mention an odd metaphoric echo of the story itself: Scottie's quest to "save" and "restore" Madeleine. But, as Scottie learned, the remake or re-do is never really identical to the original.

For one thing, the restorers have a fetish for murk equal to Hitchcock's fetish for blondes. In several key scenes—most damagingly in the climax, when the performer's faces are obliterated by shadow—the preservationists have opted for muted visual decisions less appropriate to 1958 Hollywood than to the shadow world of the modern cineplex, where films are routinely projected at three-quarters illumination to save electricity, making even light comedies sometimes resemble *SEVEN*. This dimmed-down aesthetic (if it can be called that) seems to

have influenced the restoration of *VERTIGO*, and not for the better. The result is less restorative than revisionist—Technicolor cinematographers in the '50s didn't shun light like vampires, and projectionists were stingy with their lumens. I watched the 1991 MCA video release of the film just to be sure I hadn't inadvertently worn my sunglasses at the Avco Theatre in Westwood, where the restored *VERTIGO* had its exclusive Los Angeles engagement. The video, struck from less-than-wonderful 35-millimeter elements, was nonetheless a vast improvement in the brightness department. During the final ascent to the church tower, at least one could discern both Novak's face and the sparkle of the necklace that gives away her real identity.

But take heart. The inevitable video release of the restored *VERTIGO* will give you the option to further restore Hitchcock's original vision in the privacy of your own home—via the brightness control. □

GARY KURTZ

continued from page 25

type of title, like *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. So it was just added to our list of potential titles, and it proved to be the one that worked the best. The whole idea was to have a title that might have been used for the old serial episodes. The reason for that was to keep from being overly pretentious about the film. You have to keep it in perspective, that it's just a movie and it's supposed to be entertaining and fun."

When Lucas decided not to direct the sequel to *STAR WARS*, many people were surprised by the choice of Irving Kershner to helm *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. "A lot of the pictures Kershner has made have been strong character pictures," noted Kurtz, "and we were interested in someone who had the feel for creating strong character parts. He also did some good pictures, like *THE RETURN OF A MAN CALLED HORSE*, *THE FLIM FLAM MAN*, and the TV movie, *RAID ON ENTEBBE*—they all have relatively strong action sequences. Probably the most important thing is that he believed in the fantasy. A lot of contemporary filmmakers are very cynical about life in general. Because of that it comes through in their work. You couldn't make this film with that kind of attitude."

Having stepped away from the director's chair, as well the screenwriting chores, George Lucas' creative role in *EMPIRE* was vastly reduced from the hands-on approach he took with *STAR WARS*. "George was principally involved on the interior shooting," said Kurtz. "While we were in Europe making the movie, he just came over a couple of times to see what was going on. Basically, he spent most of his time in Northern California, working with the people at ILM. He would send us tapes all the time of the work they were doing, and we would send back material of some of the scenes cut together. Some of the dailies had to be matched to the miniature work they were doing at ILM."

The original budget for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* was \$22 million, which today would just about cover the salary of Harrison Ford. Approximately \$5 million of the budget was spent on effects work. "It was about double the budget we had on *STAR WARS*," noted Kurtz. "We built a lot of new equipment for *EMPIRE*.



From left to right: C-3PO, R2-D2, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Han Solo, and Chewbacca from the triumphant award ceremony which closed *STAR WARS*. Only the robots will appear in all nine films.

It may not sound like it when you spend \$22 million on a film like this, but the techniques that we used allowed us to do effects much cheaper than were possible before *STAR WARS*. That was one of the apprehensions about *STAR WARS*. They thought the special effects couldn't be done for a reasonable amount of money using the old techniques that were utilized in the '50s." □

SOUNDTRAX

continued from page 20

was important again," music recording engineer Grover Helsley said (quoted in Fred Karlin's book, *Listening to Movies*). "Music had kind of slipped away during the Beatles era. Music had become unimportant in films. Orchestras had gotten to the point where you really couldn't afford to use them much any more. And synthesizer scores at that time weren't very good... Then, suddenly, it was orchestras again, and the importance was brought back."

It wasn't so much that *STAR WARS* was the first symphonic film score in years—it wasn't. But symphonic film music hadn't been done to this scale in years. "*STAR WARS* did not represent some big, different tradition in symphonic scoring. Symphonic film music was far from dead during this period. It was alive and well in the scores of Elmer Bernstein (*THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN*), Jerry Goldsmith (*THE OMEN*), Miklos Rozsa (*THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD*), John Scott (*THE PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT*), and others, but their work was increasingly finding its way into small action pictures and little dramas and television films. The blockbusters—what few there had been in the late '60s and early '70s—exploited the commercial appeal of pop, song, or electronic scoring. *JAWS* had been as big a

hit in 1975 as *STAR WARS* was in 1977, but its score didn't catch on except with its now standard shark-attack ostinato.

"1977 was a critical year in film music," said soundtrack producer Ford Thaxton. "New producers were recognizing the contributions of the symphonic composers like Miklos Rozsa, who was very much in demand for scores like *TIME AFTER TIME*, and Bernard Herrmann, who was making a significant comeback prior to his death in 1976 in the films of Brian DePalma, Larry Cohen, and Martin Scorsese." But even with popular hits like Williams' *JAWS* and Jerry Goldsmith's *THE OMEN* (1976's Oscar-winner for best score) symphonic film music was still something of a tolerated species looked down upon by filmmakers then in vogue.

The success of *STAR WARS* changed all that. "What *STAR WARS* did was to make symphonic scoring fashionable and acceptable again," said Thaxton. "Having a symphonic score like *STAR WARS* on your movie became a status symbol."

"Williams established the musical language that would be used for this genre of film for years to come," said composer Fred Karlin. "[Williams' earlier symphonic scores] didn't bring about a tidal wave of emotional film scoring. It took the impact of *STAR WARS*... to accomplish that, and since then, it again has become acceptable in the mainstream of filmmaking to allow the music [to] have its own symphonic emotional voice."

With his score for *STAR WARS*, Williams made possible the careers of such composers as James Horner (*BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, *STAR TREK II* and *III*), Trevor Jones (*THE DARK CRYSTAL*), and others. Within half a decade, scores like *STAR TREK*:

THE MOTION PICTURE (Jerry Goldsmith), *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS* (James Horner), and *THE FINAL COUNTDOWN* (John Scott), demonstrated their debt to Williams through broadly symphonic scores. And, of course, Williams furthered the idiom with his scores to *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* and *RETURN OF THE JEDI*.

The music in *STAR WARS* is intrinsically wedded not only to the visual images but to the characters. Its roots are in the romantic tradition, blooming with leitmo-

tifs, the style first pioneered in films by Steiner and Korngold in scores for *KING KONG* and *THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD*, which themselves harken back to the operatic music of Richard Wagner. "Like Wagner, Williams proved adept at minting signature tunes for all the major characters and emotions," director Nicholas Meyer has written of Williams' *STAR WARS* music. "Strident, brooding marches for Darth Vader and 'the dark side,' yearning strings and celeste for the vast infinitude of space and for the innocence of young Luke Skywalker, a mysterious, nostalgic sound for Obi-Wan Kenobi and the lost Jedi, a mystical but slightly mischievous tune for Yoda and an overall triumphal brass-and-percussion dominated main *STAR WARS* theme to embrace the whole. Williams' tunes in their variety of manifestations come to be automatically associated in the audiences' mind with their subjects."

The musical direction of the original *STAR WARS* came about through a close interaction between Lucas and Williams. Lucas' original idea was to use classical music on the soundtrack, as Kubrick had done in *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*; in fact, he had temp-tracked much of the film with Gustav Holst's "The Planets Suite." Both composer and director agreed on the intention of the music, but Williams convinced Lucas that his purpose would be better served by original music, which would also afford thematic development tied to the film's characters. "I think the idea really was collaborative," Williams told Fred Karlin. "Lucas had some idea of what it should be and I brought my own ideas to it and together we worked out an approach that worked to whatever extent it may have. What was intentional was just the idea of trying to produce a

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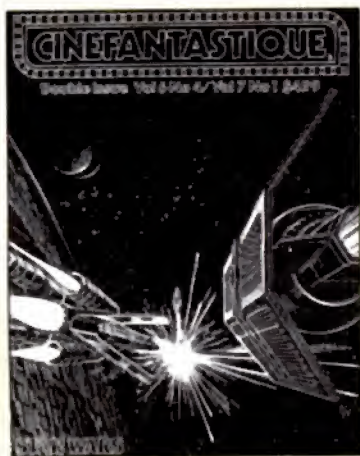
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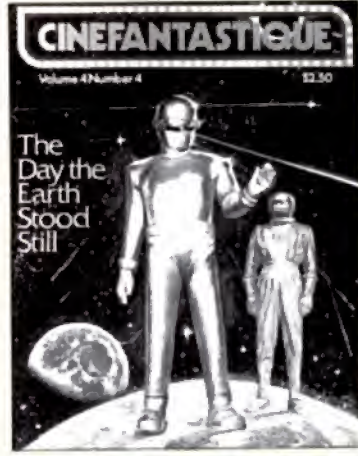
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beautifully set symphonic sound that struck late-nineteenth-century emotional and maybe even intellectual chords in some way with the listener." The resultant score is vibrant, full of optimism, heroism, and zestful adventure, relating to the wildly romantic and soaring spirits of the characters who people the film.

In the 20-odd years prior to **STAR WARS**, science fiction films had for the most part been associated with electronic music, suggestive of outer space and futuristic things to come. Williams used minimal electronics, and where he does they are integrated with his overall orchestral sound rather than called apart for effect. He composed music that corresponded to the film's characters and spirit rather than to its milieu.

"Instead of the trappings commonly associated with such films—electronic wails and screeches, bizarre avant-garde effects, quasi-atonality—[Williams] has concocted a thrilling Korngold-styled adventure film score," wrote a contemporary reviewer in *High Fidelity* magazine. "Since **STAR WARS** is technically not science fiction, but a blend of romantic fantasy and swashbuckling adventure, a conventional science fiction score would have been inappropriate; a lavish Romantic adventure score—with gusto and vibrant

sparkle—is a revelation... **STAR WARS** may well be one of the great rarities in recent years: an instant film music classic."

LASERBLAST

continued from page 31

holding a futuristic blowtorch. Though there are plenty of interesting details here, one laments that the background info is not as thorough as on other Fox discs, like the **ALIEN** special collectors set.

The original versions of these films were individually released on disc for the last time on CLV transfers that matched the Definitive Edition in quality but lacked the special features. Instead, each disc was appended by a short video interview with Lucas himself offering a few reminiscences. Interestingly for those who have yet to get these films on disc, these superior transfers with new cover art were released for \$10 less than the previously released widescreen editions and are much preferable in quality.

None of the **STAR WARS** discs have the new Digital Dolby or AC-3 encoding, which will probably be presented when the revised versions of the films finally hit home video; therefore, none of these discs can fully replicate the audio experience of a 70mm six-track stereo print in a theatre. Still for those who be-

lieve that the accomplishments of the past should not be altered or amended, these latter day discs come the closest to presenting these films the way they were originally intended to be seen, capturing at last the subtle color designs that went into their planning and presentation.

THINNER

continued from page 57

Why would a mobster, one who usually hires others to do his dirty work, show up in person, alone, to save Billy's skin, risking life and liberty in the process? Why would Billy's wife fail to recognize the doctor's interest in her? Why does a second-generation American gypsy speak with a thicker accent than her grandfather? The film offers no answers to these and other nagging questions, leaving its attempt at a bleak and foreboding ending almost laughable.

Director Tom Holland, who co-wrote the adaptation of King's novel with Michael McDowell, is capable of better than this. His recent work on King's **THE LANGOLIERS** was competent enough, and **FRIGHT NIGHT** took the same kind of tongue-in-cheek material and gave it a scary twist. **THINNER**'s release was delayed several times so that the effects could be retooled—not generally a

sign of a well-structured film—but there seems to have been little improvement in spite of the extra effort. The makeup is great, the actors all do their best, and there's nothing really wrong with the way this film looks or sounds. In the end, however, it's all just too unconvincing and mean-spirited to make us give a damn. Stephen King—and his fans—deserve better.

TO GILLIAN ON HER 37TH BIRTHDAY

continued from page 59

Rachel down with him. Her vow to fight him for custody of his own daughter, whose academic performance has plummeted, forces him to confront the impact he is having on her, and David finally gives up Gillian's ghost to concentrate on the living.

It is here that the film cops out in favor of a tidy ending. It never challenges the rest of the family to come around to David's reality. In the end, none of the family actually believes David sees Gillian, although Rachel comes closest after seeing visions of her dead mother.

Is it a blessing or a curse to see ghosts, especially when they are friendly and represent someone loved? Is David insane or simply better connected to another level of being? The film suggests neither but intriguingly leaves those decisions up to the viewer.



IMAX IN SPACE

Two films immerse viewers in special effects.

Imax is just about the most impressive film format in existence, providing an enormous screen filled with an image of stunning resolution and clarity. With only one flaw, that of the occasional strobing of swift movement, it really is like looking through a window at reality.

But finding something to fill this colossal frame is vital, and two recent Imax shorts, playing at their theatres around the country, do so with extensive visual effects: one a documentary, the other a sort of pseudo-documentary. **SPECIAL EFFECTS** provides a basic look for the uninitiated at the titular topic—such a sure-fire subject for Imax that the result cannot help being thoroughly entertaining. Not only do we go behind the scenes of **INDEPENDENCE DAY**, **JUMANJI**, and others, we also get the climax of **KING KONG** recreated for the format in color, plus a look at the retooling of **STAR WARS**.

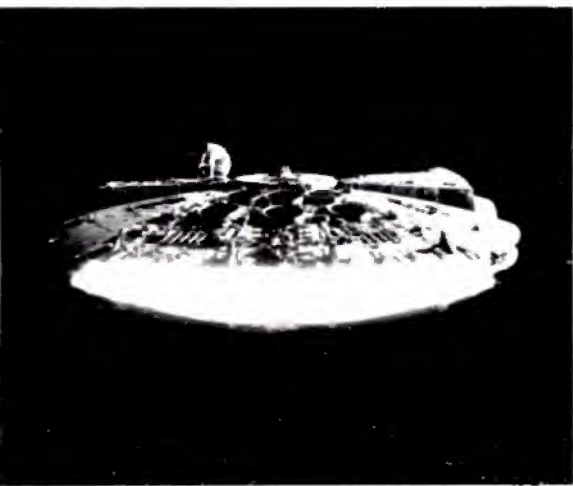
Unfortunately, this last element turns out to be the film's downfall as a documentary. Director Ben Burt, who won an Oscar for the sound design of George Lucas' film, goes out of his way to extol its virtues, even sighting it as a landmark in the development of visual effects—which it surely is. However, Burt's film condenses history of effects up to that point into a

brief montage of mostly unidentified films—about the only person named is George Melies—and, worst of all, never even mentions **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY!** (Was Burt afraid the light of his mentor's achievement would burn less bright if held up beside this still technically superior effort?) For all its amazing entertainment value, this film is nowhere near as informative as an episode of Discovery Channel's **MOVIE MAGIC**, which examines effects films without acting like a glorified trailer.

Oh well, content (or lack of it) is a criticism often leveled at Imax films, but the imagery often overwhelms this deficiency. This is certainly true of **L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE**—and more so than usual, because of the added benefit of 3-D. The film is basically a presentation of the titular city, as related by Chieko (Rachel Walker), one of the first generation born and raised there. With computer graphics, schematics, and narration, **L5** is more science speculation than fiction—a documentary of what could be rather than what has been—with a small plot element thrown in when the city needs to harness a comet as a source of water. Some decent suspense is actually worked up here, although the child's-eye point-of-view keeps us from seeing most of the mission, and the easy happy ending undermines what could have been much more powerful.

But don't let these shortcomings keep you from visiting **L5**. Astounding special effects, seen in the best 3-D ever, convey a true sense of wonder about a convincingly possible future. **Steve Biodrowski**

Top: Yoshio Mori (Dennis Akiyama) maneuvers his landing pod above the surface of a comet in L5: CITY IN SPACE. Left: new footage of the Millennium Falcon from the documentary SPECIAL EFFECTS.



L5: CITY IN SPACE

continued from page 52

thing, to hear kids' responses."

Even though the film is filled with great images and wonderful special effects, Fox said he's proud that **L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE** is "not just another gadget movie." The fact that the occupants of **L5** have to deal with the prospect of running out of resources—just like we do today—reminds us of the delicate balance of our own lives, he said.

"There's a big theme behind it all—I think it touches on where we're at on this planet of ours, the great spaceship Earth," Fox said. "It has certain values, especially the one of survival. That touches a core within all of us." □

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CGI

continued from page 43

Since **LUXO, JR.**, Pixar has received numerous accolades and awards for various short subjects and commercials. Also, they joined forces with Disney to create CAPS (Computer Animated Production System), an Academy Award-winning, computer animation system that assists in cleaning up animation drawings, coloring them, and assembling scenes.

It was **TOY STORY** that served as Pixar's biggest boost. The film was a smash because Lasseter once again used CGI as a palette to employ the techniques of traditional animation, making sure that the characters were personalities and not just special effects. The film's producer Bonnie Arnold also notes that Lasseter tried not to rely too much on the look of CGI. "On one side you have traditional cel animation, and on the other end of the extreme you have photo-realism. With computers you can achieve photo-realism, but if you're going to do that, why not just make a live action picture? So, what John was trying to achieve was believability, somewhere in between that."

TOY STORY achieved more than that. Like **SNOW WHITE**, **WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT**, and even **LUXO, JR.**, the film has gone on to become one of the medium's great landmarks. Last spring, Lasseter received a special Oscar for the film, and production is currently under way on **BUGS**, the next Disney-Pixar venture, which will be an update of the old Grasshopper and the Ant fable.

And now, to quote that oft-used phrase, the future is wide-open. Emerging technology keeps even those in the industry guessing what the next day will bring, as filmmakers both in and out of the genre continue to rely on CGI for the most minute details in film. Charles Solomon said, "What's most exciting is this prospect that the artists now have another arrow in their quiver and another tool in their kit. There are now that many fewer limits on what they can do and what audiences can see. I think the next several years, as they continue to explore the potential of those tools, should make for some exciting filmmaking." □

Jim Mitchell interviewed by Steve Biodrowski.

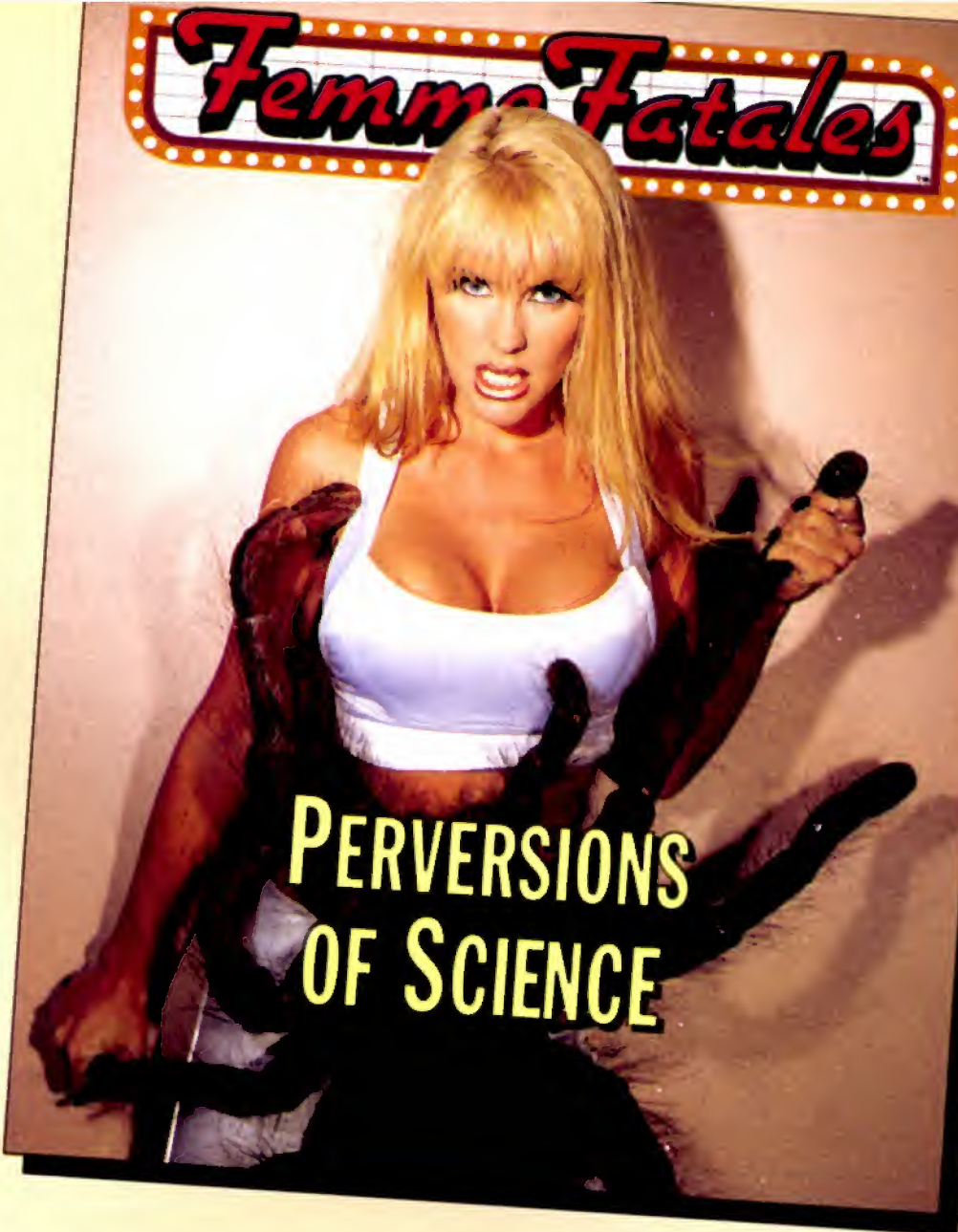
ERRATA

In #28:6, Steve Ryfle's name was misspelled in the byline of our Godzilla coverage, and Mike Lyon's byline was omitted from the Release Schedule's "Eagerly Awaited" pick, **THE PREACHER'S WIFE**. We regret our errors. □

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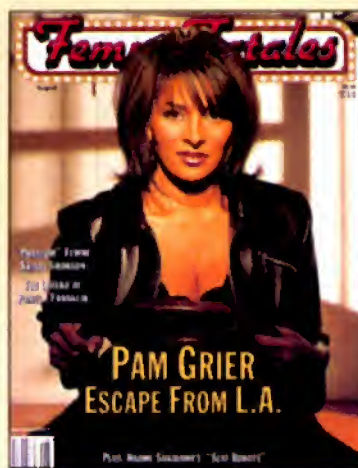
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